

SHOVELHORNS



CLARENCE HAWKES

C.1 $\frac{R}{50}$

Geraldine Lindsay Mack
from

Grandpa & Grandma

Nov. 1909.

SHOVELHORNS

The Biography of a Moose







ONE OF THEM SNAPPED VICIOUSLY AT HER FORE-LEG

Shovel Horns

*The Biography
of a Moose*

By

Clarence Hawkes

Author of

Shaggycoat

The Biography of a Beaver

Black Bruin

The Biography of a Bear

The Trail to the Woods

Tenants of the Trees

etc



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Charles Copeland*

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Dedicated to
My Brother Naturalist and Friend
ERNEST THOMPSON-SETON,

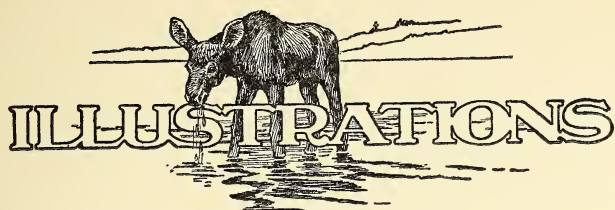
*who blazed the trail for the new
school of American nature writers,
and whose classical animal
stories have caused tens of thousands
of people who never cared
for nature before, to become
interested in out-of-door life*





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THE KING OF THE WILDERNESS

INTRODUCTION



THE KING OF THE WILDERNESS

INTRODUCTION

To those of us who love the woods and the waters it is a matter for congratulation that the most magnificent member of the deer family still spurns mother earth with his cloven hoof, or crashes down through the alders, while the stout bushes play a lively tattoo upon his broad-spreading antlers.

The finest specimens of some of our wild animals are to-day found in fossil rock and are merely suggestive of what the species has been in bygone ages ; but not so our antler crowned king, the moose ; he is more splendid, more terrible, more impetuous now than ever before.

To-day the moose is found in New Brunswick, northern Maine, Canada, Wyoming,

Idaho, British Columbia, Alberta, Minnesota, Manitoba, Athabaska, Yukon and Alaska. He ranges as far south as the parallel of forty-three degrees north latitude, and as far north as the Arctic Circle.

To show how tenaciously he clings to his favorite browsing-grounds, even in the teeth of advancing civilization, which in his case is the steam sawmill, and the rifle, it is merely necessary to glance at his record in Maine, one of the oldest settled states in the Union. Notwithstanding the fact that ten thousand hunters visit the state annually, and in nine years fifteen hundred moose were killed and shipped away, or accounted for in other ways, while as many more were killed and not accounted for, the moose still holds his own in the Pine Tree State. That he is able to do this is eloquent testimony to his cunning and his strength.

The moose-calf is born in April, and by

the time he is a year and a half old, in his second autumn, there begins to grow a very insignificant set of antlers, of which he is doubtless more vain than of any that come afterward.

The manner in which these horns are grown is most interesting. They are formed of lime which is supplied from a large artery at the back of the head. All through the spring and summer, there is a continuous flow of blood, carrying lime, to the spot where the first bunch appears.

In regions where the moose are able to secure food which contains a great deal of lime, the horns are larger. This is the case in Alaska, where record-breaking antlers are grown. The horns of the Irish elk, which is similar to our moose, sometimes reach a spread of nine feet, although he is much smaller than the American moose. The weight of a fair-sized moose-calf is seventy-five pounds.

Moose, by the way, is an Indian name, meaning wood-eater, although to the scientist he is an elk, the largest member of the deer family, and not to be confounded with our American elk, or Wapati, which is a much smaller animal, successfully kept in parks and zoos. Nearly all experiments to confine adult moose, as in a park, have failed. The notable exception to this rule is at the Cincinnati park, where a pair have been kept for five years; but most of the moose seen in parks are small immature animals, perhaps two years old.

The moose is a browser and not a grazer, his neck being too short to permit of grazing, and in confinement, his feed is what worries the keeper. Grass or hay are fatal to him, and all kinds of grain are about as bad. Browse that is cut fresh and thrown to him green, he will eat, but he seems to have need of a great deal of exercise to digest such tough fodder. If he could run

thirty or forty miles each morning after breakfast, his digestion would probably be good, even in confinement; but there is no windfall to breast and no alder thicket to crash through in the park, so he stands idly about and soon sickens and dies.

In large ranges, such as the Corbin Park in New Hampshire, and October Mountain in western Massachusetts, the moose thrives; but here his range is hundreds and thousands of acres, so the constraint put upon him is very slight.

The most magnificent specimen of the bull-moose that is known to have come under a tape measure and the results recorded, was shot by Mr. Carl Runguis, the animal painter, in New Brunswick a few years ago. This king of his kind stood just an even seven feet at the shoulders. His girth was eight feet, while the entire length of his head and body was nine feet seven inches. His great homely head alone

was two feet nine inches long. The breadth and weight of his antlers were not given, but, to make the picture complete, let us place upon him the finest set of horns extant, now in a museum at Chicago, and we will find that the entire spread of his massive antlers will be seventy-eight inches, supported by a burr five inches in diameter. The weight of this crown, which would burden any but its rightful wearer, is ninety-three and three-fourths pounds. Is it any wonder that as he travels his nose is thrust straight out, and his weighty head-gear rests upon his shoulders?

When you remember that the legs of an adult moose are four feet in length, you will better understand why his head is up among the lower branches of the forest, and how he can so easily rush with great speed through the windfall, over which man crawls slowly in pursuit of this majestic deer.

The coat of the moose is composed of

rather coarse hair, smoky gray or rusty brown in appearance, and from three to six inches in length. Along the neck and back is a coarse, bristling mane, which stands erect when the monarch is enraged.

The moose has three peculiarities which look almost like deformities, and at once differentiate him from his wild kindred. These are his long, overhanging, prehensile upper lip, with which he reaches so effectively for lily-pads and browse ; the hump at the shoulders, and his ridiculous little tail, which seems to have been made for some other animal and then stuck upon him by mistake.

But when this mighty lord of the wilderness swings down through the timber, his hoofs clacking like huge castanets, his great antlers laid back upon his shoulders, his breath whistling through his wide-extended nostrils like a small steam-engine, his eyes blazing, his mane bristling, the rage of

battle quivering in every muscle and ligament, his peculiarities are forgotten and one swings his hat about his head and shouts for the king, although at the time he may be doing homage from the top of a tree, while the monarch stamps and snorts at the foot.

The bison and the beaver have practically disappeared from the confines of the United States, but this mighty deer still clings tenaciously to four or five states. Men lure him to death with their moose calls; they track him through the deep snows when he is helpless, and in a score of ways lead him to destruction. But he fights the battle of wilderness cunning, against the artifices of civilization, as no other wild creature can. It is a supreme tribute to his quick wit and to his strength that every moose killed in the state of Maine averages in cost to the hunter six hundred dollars.

King of the Wilderness, I greet thee and pray that before it is too late, legislators and all who love primitive nature unspoiled by the ruthless hand of greedy man, will arouse themselves to the necessity of protecting thy crown of horns, before we lose forever the last priceless heritage of the red man, his tall, striding moose.



CHAPTER I
A CALL IN THE STARLIGHT



Shovelhorns

CHAPTER I

A CALL IN THE STARLIGHT

ON a perfect autumn night, the waters of Lake Lonely, in northern New Brunswick, are as smooth as a mirror and as transparent as glass. So still it is that it might well be the abode of the Great Spirit, which is the Indian tradition concerning Lake George.

The only sounds that disturb the stillness are the demoniacal laughter of a loon, the occasional peeping of a hyla, or the sudden splash of a great trout as he jumps for some night-moth or fly.

It was upon such a night as this that out of the dim depths of the mysterious

woods there came a tall, strident, dingy, gray figure, seemingly clumsy and awkward, but moving as furtively and silently as a shadow. When the tall stranger emerged into the full moonlight, wading knee-deep in the water, and began cropping lily-pads, there was revealed the rather grotesque form of a cow-moose, which suffers considerably in comparison with the bull-moose, unless he is minus his antlers, the crown of his splendor.

But even this old cow was a magnificent figure as she lifted her head, towering to her full height to sniff the night-wind.

At the shoulder she was as high as a tall man, over six feet. Her head was massive and its long prehensile upper lip seemed almost like a deformity until one saw her reaching for lily-pads or browse. Then it was seen to be most admirably adapted to its purpose.

Man in his ignorance sometimes smiles

at the seeming grotesqueness of nature's handiwork, but when he sees the ridiculed member doing the work that nature intended, a sudden silence falls upon him and the marvel of it all is apparent.

Just at the old cow's shoulders was a good-sized hump, which also added to her ungainly appearance. Toward the hind quarters she sloped away considerably, and her tail was another of nature's practical jokes, for it was very short and insignificant for so large an animal.

Suddenly, upon the stillness, from the other side of the lake, sounded a long, deep-chested bellow, which terminated in a high crescendo ;—just about such a sound as one often hears from the chest of a great Durham, only this bawl was more prolonged and not so mellow.

The old cow listened intently until the sound died away and then fell to cropping lily-pads again. Soon the call was repeated

with more insistence, more pathos, and more entreaty, and this time she answered with a kindred bawl.

Then from the opposite side of the lake was heard a faint crashing and thrashing in the underbrush, as though some animal of gigantic stature was making his way through the woods in hot haste.

It was nearly half a mile across the lake, and three-quarters around the end; and judging from the thrashing in the underbrush, and an occasional pleading bellow, which said as plainly as such a harsh reverberating sound could say, "I am coming, wait for me," the great antlered king of the wilderness sought his mate.

But the old cow, with true feminine perverseness, after plainly intimating by her answering calls that she would wait, loped off into the woods, so that when the mighty broad-antlered king of the forest rushed, blowing and snorting, to the point where the

cow had been feeding a moment before, his prospective mate had vanished, and the lake was shimmering in silent loneliness.

After blowing and pawing about for a few seconds, the wilderness monarch thrashed off through the bushes after the wayward cow, and, following the instinct of his kind, he went in the right direction.

Thirty or forty rods from the lake, his keen ear caught the snapping of a twig not far ahead and he slowed down to a cautious trot. As the eager bull drew near to a thicket from which the sounds came, he was treated to a genuine surprise, for at the moment he hesitated at the edge of the cover, a second bull, almost as gigantic as himself, charged forth upon him.

Here, then, was the secret of the waywardness of the old cow. There was a rival in the field.

Blowing and snorting with rage, he met the newcomer and the impact of their broad

antlers rang out with a harsh, hard sound through the forest.

For a second neither yielded ground, but the strength of the great bull was too much for his rival. Fighting desperately, he was borne back into the thicket from which he had emerged.

Saplings bent and broke with a loud report as the battle swayed from point to point. There were hoarse bellows of rage, snapping of teeth and the terrible impact of sharp-cutting hoofs. Foam dripped from their muzzles and their breathing was in quick, hard gasps.

Suddenly, as though worsted, the great bull gave ground, stepping aside as his adversary lunged at him. This exposed his rival's broadside, and as he passed, he raked him mercilessly across the back and flank with his heavy antlers, drawing blood in several places. One deep cut gaped open to the bone.

The stratagem was new to the younger bull, but he was not daunted and charged valiantly back at his adversary. This time, being enraged with his impudence, the old champion of many battles met him squarely and bore him back through the bushes, fighting desperately.

Again and again the old bull broke down his defense and gashed his shoulders and sides with his horns, but he was game and contested every rod of the ground.

Gradually the bending and thrashing and breaking of the saplings drew near to the lake. Clearly it was now a running fight, for suddenly the courage of the larger bull seemed to collapse, and he broke from the cover and plunged into the water. The victor contented himself with standing upon the bank, snorting and stamping in mighty rage. Swiftly the form of the vanquished bull slipped away, and in a few minutes only his nose and antlers showed like a

mere speck far out in the middle of the lake.

When he had satisfied himself that his love-making would not be again disturbed that night by the stranger, the bull went back to the thicket where the old cow waited his coming.

In the wilderness, as in civilized communities, "to the victor belong the spoils." He had conquered his rival, and henceforth the allegiance of this particular moose-cow was his. The vanquished bull might seek a mate in other regions, but if he was wise he would not again invade his domain.

For a month or six weeks the old cow and her spring calf with the conquering bull came and went about Lake Lonely and in among the foothills of the more rugged adjacent country.

During the last week in October, a canoe containing two persons and a camping outfit was pushed into the stream; known as

Indian River. This river had its source in this picturesque New Brunswick lake, and the wilderness hunter and his guide began the arduous task of forcing the canoe up the stream.

They were in no hurry, however, and camped and hunted by the way, so it was nearly a week later when they drew the canoe upon the bank at the source of the stream, which was at the lower end of Lake Lonely.

They soon had their tent pitched and a camp-fire burning. Half an hour's fishing in the lake gave them all the trout they could eat in two days and it was with contented minds that they smoked their evening pipes before the camp-fire and told stories of the wilderness and big game.

The hunter was a stalwart young fellow from the city, who always spent his vacations in the big woods, muscular and athletic and a great talker.

The guide was an old Scotchman who had grown gray, swinging the paddle and handling the rifle. He was tall and spare, with a quick alert manner and a step as light as that of a cat. His face was so tanned and sunburned that his wrinkled skin was about the color of leather. His habitual expression was solemn, almost funereal, but his keen blue eyes often twinkled humorously under his shaggy eyebrows. His words were very few and usually cynical, but if one really wanted to know what he thought, he had merely to watch his eyes, for he often said one thing, and meant quite another.

Whenever he took a new man into the woods he always cautioned him about handling his rifle carefully. His rule in this particular was as effective as it was astonishing.

"Now, mon," he would say, pointing one skinny finger at the would-be Nimrod,

"dinny pump lead in every direction. This is serious beesness and no Fourth of July picnic, and by the livin' God if ye shoot me instead uv a buck, I'll return lead for lead, if there's a breath of life left in me. I dinny want to murder you, mon, so be careful."

This rule for two had the desired effect and men who hunted with Sandy McPherson never did any accidental shooting, but occasionally a rather nervous individual refused to agree to such an arrangement and sought another guide, saying that he did not care "to hunt with a madman."

The following afternoon the guide carefully cut a section of bark about three feet long from a small birch and skilfully fashioned it into a sort of megaphone or horn. One never would have imagined, had he not seen it done, that so symmetrical a horn could have been made from such rough material.

After supper they sat about the camp-fire for an hour, waiting for darkness, but as there was a full moon and the stars were so thick that the heavens seemed almost luminous, not much was gained by waiting. Finally they pushed the canoe into the water and paddled silently to the upper end of the lake. They kept close to the shore and went as much as possible in the shadows cast by overhanging trees on the water, which under the magic touch of moonbeams and starlight and with the heavens plainly mirrored in the depths beneath, seemed almost phosphorescent.

Once when the canoe brushed against a bunch of reeds near shore, a duck gave a frightened quack and rising in air flopped away to a distant part of the lake. Again, they heard the soft winnowing of wings as a flock of night voyagers flew by overhead, uttering occasional soft quacks as they went. Now and then an old bullfrog croaked

feebly in the pickerel grass near the bank, but most of the frogs had lost their enthusiasm these chilly autumn evenings. With them spring is the time to sing and to court. Now they would soon be sleeping in their mud-beds at the bottom of the lake, or under the dead leaves along shore.

Having reached the point which he had in mind, the guide ran the canoe under the lee of some alder bushes and tied her.

It was a fine vantage-ground from which to command the lake. At their back was a bluff thirty or forty feet high and so steep that no quarry would approach from that direction. To the right and left they commanded both banks of the lake which were sandy and quite open.

The high bank would help keep the breeze from carrying their scent, even with the wind behind them, while the moon also at their backs lit the lake almost as bright

as day, leaving them in the shadow under the bluff.

"Ideal spot," whispered the young hunter.

The guide chuckled. "The Lord must hev had moose-calling in mind when He struck it out," he whispered back.

Slowly filling his lungs, as though for a long swim under water, the guide lifted the birch-bark horn to his lips and from its bell sent forth such a deep-toned and mighty bellow, so sustained, so enormous in volume, that the young man in his astonishment said, "G-whiz," in his ordinary tone of voice.

"Shut up, will you," hissed the guide; "sound carries an awful ways on a night like this."

Down the lake the deep-toned bellow rolled. The foothills on each side caught it up and tossed it back and forth in three distinct echoes. Finally it died away into a faint thin wave of sound, just as the waves

die on the lake when a pebble is cast into the water.

After a minute or so the hills again reverberated with the resonant far-reaching call. This time it ended in three or four deep guttural grunts.

An owl, high up in a pine at the top of the bluff, set up a most unearthly screeching and laughter, just as though he alone saw through the little game and thought the joke too good to keep.

"I wish he'd shut up," whispered the hunter.

"He won't do no harm," returned the guide, "but if a loon should see us he would tell everybody within hearing. The loon is a maist uncanny bird."

For nearly two hours the moose-callers stayed in their place of hiding under the bluff, practicing their deceitful art upon Lake Lonely and the surrounding wilderness.

To the young hunter the silences that followed the periodic calls were like no other stillness he had ever felt. His nerves were keyed to the highest pitch, and his ear-drums strained almost to the bursting-point, but listen as he would he heard no answering challenge that night.

At last when the patience of the young hunter was exhausted, they turned the bow of the canoe toward camp and paddled silently back.

"Didn't have much luck, did we?" said the younger man as they disembarked.

"Oh, I denno, mon," replied old Sandy. "Maybe we did, and maybe we didn't. Moose-calling is maist uncert'in business. But I tell ye one thing. If you shoot a bull-moose this trip you will larn patience, mon, if you don't anything else."

For five days the two campers lingered about Lake Lonely. In the daytime they fished, hunted partridge, and looked for

moose signs ; in the evening they practiced the art of moose-calling.

The fifth day of their sojourn they were rewarded for their patience by finding fresh moose signs in a little run about two miles from the head of the lake.

"Mon," said Sandy, pointing to a fresh track of enormous size in the moist earth, "there's your bull and if you get him, he will be the biggest bull that has gone out of this region in years. He's been away on a journey and has just got back, or we would have seen signs of him before."

The city hunter was all excitement and to his keen imagination the head and horns of the bull-moose already loomed up big in the window of the store where he worked.

By eight o'clock that evening they were once more located in their old hiding-place under the bluff, sounding the defiant challenge of a belligerent bull. One hour went by and two, and the hopes of the young

hunter, which had been high earlier in the evening, were at a low ebb. At last when they were just considering giving up for that night, faint and far away among the foothills they heard their challenge answered. The rival must have been two miles away, but there was no mistaking his deep-chested bellow of defiance.

Again the guide inflated his lungs, puffed out his cheeks and made answer. For five minutes there was absolute silence, then the foothills again echoed with a belligerent bellow, this time much nearer. Once more the guide made good with an equally sonorous bawl ending in a crescendo of direst rage.

The advancing moose seemed to take this as a sort of disparagement of his own valor, for while he had hitherto advanced cautiously, he now crashed through the underbrush like a cyclone, snorting and blowing as he came.

When almost down to the sand-bar at the

edge of the lake, he stopped just in the outer fringe of the cover, and for five minutes the lake was as still as though forsaken by all forms of life. The frogs ceased their croaking and the night-birds their cries. It was as though all the spectators of this night tragedy waited breathlessly to see the next move.

"He is suspicious," whispered Sandy, "but I guess I can start him." Again he lifted the birch-bark trumpet and woke the stillness with a bellow, prolonged and menacing, full of defiance and rage.

The young man's heart gave a great bound of exultation and the rifle came to his shoulder as the real monarch of Lake Lonely crashed through the underbrush on to the sandspit, snorting and blowing, his kingly head high in air, his eyes burning like coals, his mane erect upon his neck, and every inch of his mighty frame quivering with the rage of battle.

A moment he stood there in the full moonlight, clearly outlined against the thicket from which he had emerged ; regal with his mighty antler crown, the king of all the deer and nature's rightful sovereign of the northern wilderness. Then the forty-five calibre rifle in the hunter's hand belched fire and its detonating thunder filled the night with the crack of doom.

The king of Lake Lonely gave a quick, convulsive spring, but midway in air his brain refused to control his mighty muscles and he collapsed and fell sprawling and kicking, like a creature in which the life principle is strong and dies hard.

It was not until a second bullet, hurtled across the lake, had struck him fairly in the chest, that he ceased his struggles and lay still. Even in death, as the hunters found him, when they had paddled to the spot, he was still the antler-crowned monarch of the wilderness.

As inanimate as a fallen oak he lay, but his mighty stature still proclaimed him the colossus of the woods, although life had left him.

A month later the massive antlers were indeed in the show-window of the New York drug store, properly mounted and fastened to a portion of the bull's skull, which had been brought away for the purpose. The trophy was admired by all, but to any one who had seen him in his native wilderness, it was incomplete, for the picture was without its frame. The jewel had fallen from its setting, and as for Lake Lonely it was lonelier than ever, as the sorrowing moose-cow well knew.

For about four weeks the solitary old moose-cow and her last spring's calf lingered about Lake Lonely. For the first few days after the disappearance of the great bull, she wandered hither and thither, calling and calling, and then listening for the

deep, far-reaching bellow that she knew so well ; but the only response was the mocking echo that played pranks among the foothills about the lake.

In the meanwhile the crisp, brown leaves fluttered down from the scrub-oak and the more gorgeous ones from the maple. The aspen and the poplar, the beech and the bass-wood were entirely bare. But with the waning glory of the old year, the stag-horn sumac, and the mountain-ash, the juniper, and the bittersweet, put on glorious red and crimson berries that shone with all the more dazzling brightness, because the rest of the wilderness had put off its regal splendor and donned the sober grays and browns in anticipation of coming snow.

With each week that passed, the north wind freshened and became more boisterous, for he knew that his hour was at hand. Each night he danced a jig in the denuded trees, causing their branches to rub com-

plainly together, while the boisterous roister whistled through the leafless twigs in uncontrollable glee.

Late in November the first snowfall came. Great feathery, drifting, floating flakes zigzagged down through the clear, crisp air almost as waywardly as thistle-down.

About this time the old cow allied herself to a small moose-herd that came into the vicinity of Lake Lonely. This was partly for company and also that she and her calf might enjoy the protection and advantage of the moose-yard during the coming winter. Nearly all the members of the deer family are gregarious, and at certain times of the year associate together in herds, both for mutual protection and also that their united strength may combat the ever sifting, drifting snows which are a serious menace even to the strongest and most intrepid member of the family, the moose.

This herd was a small one, consisting of a

bull, a cow, a six-months-old calf, and the last year's calf, now a year and a half old. The leader was a large, broad-antlered moose of perhaps six years, and to his wisdom and woodcraft all looked for food and safety.

They lingered about the lake until it was apparent that the winter had set in in earnest; then the lordly bull led his little, silent, gray-brown procession twenty miles down Indian River, into a densely wooded region, where two smaller streams entered the larger one, which they were following. Here they took up winter-quarters.

CHAPTER II
LITTLE MOOSIE



CHAPTER II

LITTLE MOOSIE

It was an ideal spot for a moose-yard, well sheltered from the winds by an amphitheater of foothills. Back a mile or two from the main stream that threaded the valley, in a steep side-hill, were a couple of free, turbulent springs, which were so persistent in their bubbling and gurgling, that they rarely froze over in winter. The moose will eat snow when he cannot get water, but he prefers a living spring like this one when he can find it in the neighborhood of good browsing-ground, which is the first consideration.

In this well-favored spot, where the wind did not drift the snow, and where the heavily wooded acres of evergreen helped to keep

free small circles under each tree, it was comparatively easy to have the snow well trodden down in the moose-yard. With his sledge-hammer hoofs, the bull-moose beats down the snowdrifts and keeps his yard free from deep snow; while with his strong, deep breast he bends down the small saplings and strips them of their last twig and all their bark.

The sifting, drifting snow, the tempest howling in the tops of the leafless trees, and the biting frost, are all tonics to his blood, and his great strength is equal to almost any hardship; so that, as long as browse is plentiful, he can defy the elements and from his wide nostrils blow back the breath of the keen north wind, warmed and chastened.

If there was any plan for this yard, it was probably located in the head of the majestic leader of the herd, but I imagine there was none. They merely came and went along the line of least resistance. Such a winding,

twisting labyrinth of paths it would be hard to imagine anywhere, except in a laurel swamp, where the rabbits had been playing tag all the winter.

If one had gone about the confines of the yard in the early spring, when the herd broke up and all went their several ways, he would have been astonished at the havoc wrought upon maple, birch, hemlock, spruce, aspen, alder and willow. The moose, when at the point of starvation, will condescend to attack almost any tree that has small twigs within reach, but these are his favorites. By springtime all the small saplings in this yard had been breasted down and stripped of their twigs and bark, while the lower limbs upon larger trees had been pulled down and served in the same manner.

Small bushes in some cases had been eaten clear to the ground, and only the stubs told of their sorrowful fate. What the

moose had not done to spruce and hemlock, had been completed by the porcupine, who can carry on his destructive work high up in the trees.

As if in recompense for the winter's plenteous browse, the bull had left his broad-spreading antlers by one of the springs. Here they lay in the mold among last year's leaves, of no more worth, now they had served their purpose, than a dead limb from a decaying tree, although some lucky fisherman or hunter might have considered them quite a prize.

At last the warm winds and rains of early April caused the snow to settle and melt rapidly. Down every hillside trickled a dozen tiny rills, cold as the melting snow itself. Each added its mite to the streams in the valleys which ran turbulent. But it was a song of glee, of glad rushing waters, eager for the vales and lowlands farther on.

One day in April the old cow, who had

cast in her fortune with the little moose-herd for the winter, slipped noiselessly away and was not seen by them for more than a week. She went far up one of the smaller streams, which was tributary to that on which the moose-yard was located. In the lowlands this rivulet was fringed with alders and willows and bordered with sweet flag and cat-tails; but back among the foothills it laughed gleefully through dingle dells, where the spruce and the larch hung darkling, where the mossy banks would later on be fretted with ferns and where the shadows were deep and cool.

Into many thickets and dark covers the old cow thrust her homely head, before she found the place she sought. At last, she came to a little ravine where the firs stood so thick that she could scarce push her way between them, and where under the dark green plumes so little sunlight penetrated that a perpetual twilight reigned. Here

there were no ferns or mosses, but a carpet of soft green needles which had silently sifted down until it was several inches thick.

In this silent twilight of the wilderness dell little Moosie was born, and only a white-throated sparrow knew about it; but this sparrow was delighted at being let into their secret and cried, "See, see, see the small moose; see, see, see the small moose," over and over, again and again, until one would have thought that the little bird really understood that a famous moose-calf had been born, whose great hulk would one day crash through the forest like a cyclone.

But as the jubilant white-throat first saw him, he looked like almost anything except the wilderness monarch that he was one day destined to become. When his mother had licked him dry and he arose on his long, large-jointed, rickety legs to nurse, his appearance was indeed ludicrous. For real,

downright homeliness there is no wilderness baby that approaches a moose-calf.

He was of a dull brick red, or rusty brown color, rather lighter on the underside. His coat was shorter and finer than that of the old cow, but not as fine as that of a domestic calf. At the shoulders he was just about a yard high, but he sloped away so rapidly that at the hips he was six inches lower, which made him look rather weak behind.

His legs were so long, and so out of all proportion to his small, short body, that it was about two feet up to his elbow; and, as his full height was only three feet, this made him have the appearance of being on stilts. His chest was eleven or twelve inches deep, and his entire length was about three and a half feet. If he had been put upon the scales he would have tipped the beam at about seventy-five pounds. His joints were very large, like those of a little colt, only more so, and his neck was so short that he

could not touch the ground with his nose unless he got down upon his knees, and whenever he drank, he had to wade knee-deep in the water.

His tail was so diminutive that at the first glance you would have declared he was tailless. His head was large and unshapely, with his ears set low down upon the skull. His eyes were not large, and his upper lip was so long and hung down so far beyond the lower one that it had the appearance of having been pulled and stretched out of all proportions. Altogether Moosie was the most awkward, ungainly, homely wilderness baby that ever followed its wild mother blindly ; but, to the eye of a woodman, his tall, loose-jointed little frame would at once have proclaimed him a most promising calf. In fact, he was large and strong for his kind, and every day that passed added to his strength and stature.

But as little Moosie butted at his mother's

udder in his eagerness to get his supper, while the tall lank cow turned her head and craned her neck to look at him, she doubtless thought him the most beautiful and wholly satisfactory creature that she had ever seen and she would continue to think so until she gave birth to her next calf, when the present idol would have to take second place.

For three days they stayed in the deep seclusion of the wilderness dell, nicely hidden away from curious eyes. There were not many of the forest creatures who would have dared to molest them, for the old cow was morose and a terrible fighter when aroused, as she always was, when her calf was in danger, but she did not want to take any chances while he was still weak upon his legs.

On the afternoon of the third day, when the shadows of the tree-trunks were rapidly lengthening and the chill of the spring twi-

light had begun to creep into the air, they came noiselessly out of their seclusion and started briskly down the little stream, on their way back to the old winter-quarters.

The white-throat, who had kept them company through their brief sojourn in the dell, became much excited at their going and cried out shrilly, "See, see, here goes our calf."

They went only a mile or two that afternoon and at dusk lay down in another thicket much like the one which they had left. But before lying down for the night Moosie had to nurse again. In fact, whenever they stopped for a few moments, he was back at his mother's udder, butting and sucking away for dear life. Whenever his efforts became too violent, the old moose would step aside, thus interrupting the meal. In this manner the calf was soon taught that discretion was the better part of valor and he would go about getting his supper in a decent manner.

When Moosie was satisfied, the old cow also looked after her own wants, for she had eaten little for the past three days and was fairly ravenous. She selected a small aspen, ten or twelve feet in height, and walking astride it, caused it to bend down to the ground beneath her breast. Here she held it under one fore-leg, while she stripped it clean of all buds and small twigs. As the buds were filled with acrid sap and also contained the embryo leaves, rolled up so tightly that one would scarce have recognized the fact, they made a very good meal. When the sapling had been stripped clean, the cow stepped along and up it flew with a great swish.

Just as Moosie was nicely settled for the night, his hunger having been appeased and a soft spot for his awkward little body found under a low-bending spruce, there floated down the aisles of the still denuded forest a sound so mournful, so unearthly,

that it seemed the very spirit of fear and of despair.

It was a thin, wavering, high-keyed howl which rose and fell with diabolical effect, now filling the forest with lamentation, then dying away to a mere thread of sound. In it were blended the plaint of the wind, the mournful screech of an owl and the despair of a lost soul.

At the sound, which was quite distant, the old cow wheeled quickly and thrust her muzzle down against the calf as though to make sure that he was still by her side. A shiver ran through her tall, gaunt frame, and her long upper lip caressed the calf feverishly. For a moment she hesitated, uncertain, and then she silently led the way back up-stream for a few rods to a deep gulch through which they had passed half an hour before.

The wild, unearthly, high-keyed howl again sounded, now much nearer, while a

quarter of a mile down-stream came an answering cry, high-keyed, tremulous and fearful, like the first.

At the second cry, which was much closer, a chill as of a cold wind ran through Moosie's awkward little frame and he crowded close to his tall, gaunt mother and thrust his muzzle impetuously against her side.

Straight to an overhanging rock which walled up one side of the gorge, the old cow led the way. This boulder was perhaps ten feet high and fell away on the underside into a sort of natural cave three or four feet in width and running back for about the same distance. Into this natural rock fortress Moosie was hastily thrust while the old cow stationed herself before him, shutting off his exit and barring him from danger with her four sturdy legs.

There she stood at bay, her tall, awkward form towering up against the rock, her eyes

blazing, her breath whistling through her nostrils viciously, her trumpet-like ears thrust forward to catch the slightest sound, and her nostrils extended to sift the wind critically.

She was hornless, of course, but her sharp-cutting hoofs could descend like lightning, bringing down the better part of her eight or nine hundred pounds' weight upon her adversary; so when she stood at bay with her back to the cliff and her calf in the recess behind her, with her strong mother-love to spur her on, she was a mighty foe and one that no ordinary wild creature would attack.

Presently the cries in the woods about them ceased and the old moose knew intuitively that their fresh trail in the near-by thicket had been discovered. Soon she heard a soft patter of feet in the glade and a second later a tall, gaunt, gray wolf trotted into the moonlight and stood watching

them a few rods away, his eyes glittering brightly and the long hair upon his neck standing erect. He was soon joined by another and still another. Like gray spectral shadows they came until there were seven of them standing in a semicircle about the beleaguered cow and calf.

Nearer and nearer they drew, their eyes glowing more fiercely as keen expectation whetted their appetites, and the scent of blood and battle filled their nostrils. Hunting had been poor that spring and they were nearly famished. This small pack of gray timber wolves were about the only representatives of the wolf family that still existed in northern New Brunswick, where wolves had become nearly extinct; but this pack had a history and its cunning leader was surrounded with such a halo of miraculous tradition, that the scattering settlements scarcely knew whether he really existed or not, though occasional raids upon sheep

were strong evidence that he did. But of him and his curious history we will tell more in another chapter. Suffice it to say, that he was really no wolf at all, but a gigantic gray collie dog, whom a strange fortune had driven back to the wild where he had cast in his lot with the wolves.

Still nearer and nearer drew the gray circle. Little Moosie, staring wide-eyed from between his mother's legs, saw their hungry eyes and white-bared fangs, and a terrible fear gripped him. The old cow uttered hoarse, angry grunts and blew fierce challenges of hot breath through her wide-extended nostrils, as they closed confidently in, but they little knew the temper and fighting qualities of this particular moose.

Finally one of them, more eager than cautious, sprang and snapped viciously at her fore-leg. The wolf's teeth clicked like a steel trap as they came together, but they closed upon empty air, for the same instant

that he sprang, the fore-leg went up as quick as lightning and descended like a sledge-hammer, laying open to the bone the side of the wolf's head.

With a yelp of pain and fear, he sprang back among his fellows, but at the sight and the smell of his own blood flowing so freely, a great terror clutched him. Full well he knew the law of the pack, for, only the week before, he had helped tear his own litter brother to shreds, because he had been found with a bullet-hole in his shoulder.

With a snarl, a bound and a rush, he went through the pack, which on the instant had begun to close in upon him, and ran for his life. In the thicket where the cow and the calf had lain down half an hour before, they overtook him and pulled him to the ground. For a few seconds there was a desperate struggle, but it was soon over.

Presently, one by one, they slunk back into the gorge and again formed that semi-

circle about the two moose, but now there were six instead of seven. This time they approached much more cautiously, and two or three would spring in at once, never coming quite near enough for the old cow to reach them. Several times she struck, but they managed just to escape her blows.

Finally the leader of the wolf-pack, who was not quite as tall or gaunt as the rest, and who had been sitting on his haunches watching the battle, advanced to the attack, while the rest of the pack drew off and watched him. As he circled first upon this side and then upon that, the hair upon his neck went up and his eyes glittered like fire. His motions were like lightning and his muscles seemed like tense springs. He barely touched the tip of his toes to the ground and bounded in and retreated so rapidly that he seemed more like a phantom creature than a real live animal. Several times he sprang so close that his teeth al-

most reached the old cow's legs and once he drew blood, gashing her leg deeply. Emboldened by his example the rest closed in, and there was a wild disorder of leaping, snapping gray forms.

In the midst of this confusion, the old cow again planted her hoof fairly upon the top of a wolf's head and brought him to earth, crushing his skull like an egg-shell. Then, in a frenzy of rage, she reared upon her hind legs and stamped him into a sorrowful mass, while the rest of the pack drew back, intimidated by their comrade's fate. At last the quivering wolf lay still and the old fury ceased her trampling.

For an hour the pack contented itself with sitting about in that eager semicircle, watching with hungry eyes and licking their chops. Finally their spirits were again spurred to the fighting-point by their intrepid leader, who circled in closer and closer, yelping excitedly, and thus betray-

ing his dog identity, while his gray brothers went silently about their work.

He was clearly the master spirit of them all. His motions were like lightning. A gray streak here and a gray blur there and he had sprung and recoiled. Again they resorted to the tactics of attacking in numbers and the old cow was taxed to her utmost to keep them from breaking through and getting at little Moosie, who crouched trembling behind her legs. Once when the entire pack had charged and a great, gray, gaunt wolf had broken through between the protecting legs of the old cow and gashed his long lank hind leg, his pitiful bleat drove his mother to a frenzy and she rained blows upon the beleaguering pack until they at last drew off for the moment.

This terrible strain was telling upon her. Her breath came almost in sobs. Sweat dripped from her sides and her muzzle was covered with foam. But the pack gave her

no respite, as it firmly intended to dine on moose veal. So in a few seconds they were back at her again, their jaws snapping like steel-traps and their hungry eyes burning like phosphorus. Closer and closer they pressed her to the wall, till at last in a very whirlwind of battle the old fury ploughed a furrow in the shoulder of the desperate gray leader. This wound did more to win the battle for her than the death of half the rest of the pack would have done, for he was the mainspring of this fighting machine and without his intrepidity and cunning, the pack was just an ordinary lot of skulking timber wolves.

Instantly they perceived his wound and gathered close in about him, baring their fangs and licking their chops expectantly. He knew the law of the pack as well as they but was not afraid.

He backed up to the cliff just as the moose-cow had done and the hair upon his

back and neck stood up like the quills upon an irate porcupine. His eyes seemed fairly to snap fire and his muscles quivered with fighting rage. At first the pack were inclined to close in and finish him, but their intent soon changed and finally they slunk off a few feet and sat about upon their tails, watching him lick his wound. Their manner plainly said that for once the law of the pack would be disregarded.

The first gray streak of dawn was now appearing and the birds were twittering drowsily, for they were not yet fairly awake. The morning wind blew fresh up the valley. Presently one of the wolves lifted his nose high in air and sniffed critically. Several times he tasted it, then slunk away down the ravine like a gray shadow. A minute later the long, mournful hunting cry of the pack floated back to them up the valley and of one accord they fled after their comrade like the wind.

When the first wild cry broke upon the morning stillness, a fine large buck of probably three hundred pounds' weight and with fantastic antlers had been browsing about forty rods down the ravine. The keen nose of the watchful wolf had told him as much. The fresh breeze blew straight up the gulch, bringing his scent to the wolf, but giving him in return no suspicion of danger. At the first cry, his head went up like a flash, his nostrils extended wide and clearing the bushes upon which he was browsing at a single bound, he was off like the wind. The gray pack soon picked up his trail and started after him with that indefatigable wolf lope that eats up English miles as almost no other gait can.

The brave buck fled on, swimming streams, plunging through deep tamarack swamps, leaping down steep declivities, covering the wildest, roughest country that

he knew. Once he took a hair-rising leap from a high bank on one side of a swift-running stream to the opposite side, but the sure nose of the wolf told the way he had gone. Tireless as the wind, they followed. All the labyrinths he penetrated they ferreted out. Toward noon, when they had covered many miles, they came close up to him. He was badly blown. Sweat stood upon his flanks and foam upon his muzzle. They slackened their pace and spreading out in a fan-shape, drove him slowly toward a woodland lake. Seeing the cool water ahead, the exhausted buck deemed that safety was at hand. He would take to the water and swim away from his pursuers ; but he little knew their craft. No sooner had he plunged into the lake than the pack divided and half their number went around on the other side to head him off. They could travel much faster on land than he could in the water.

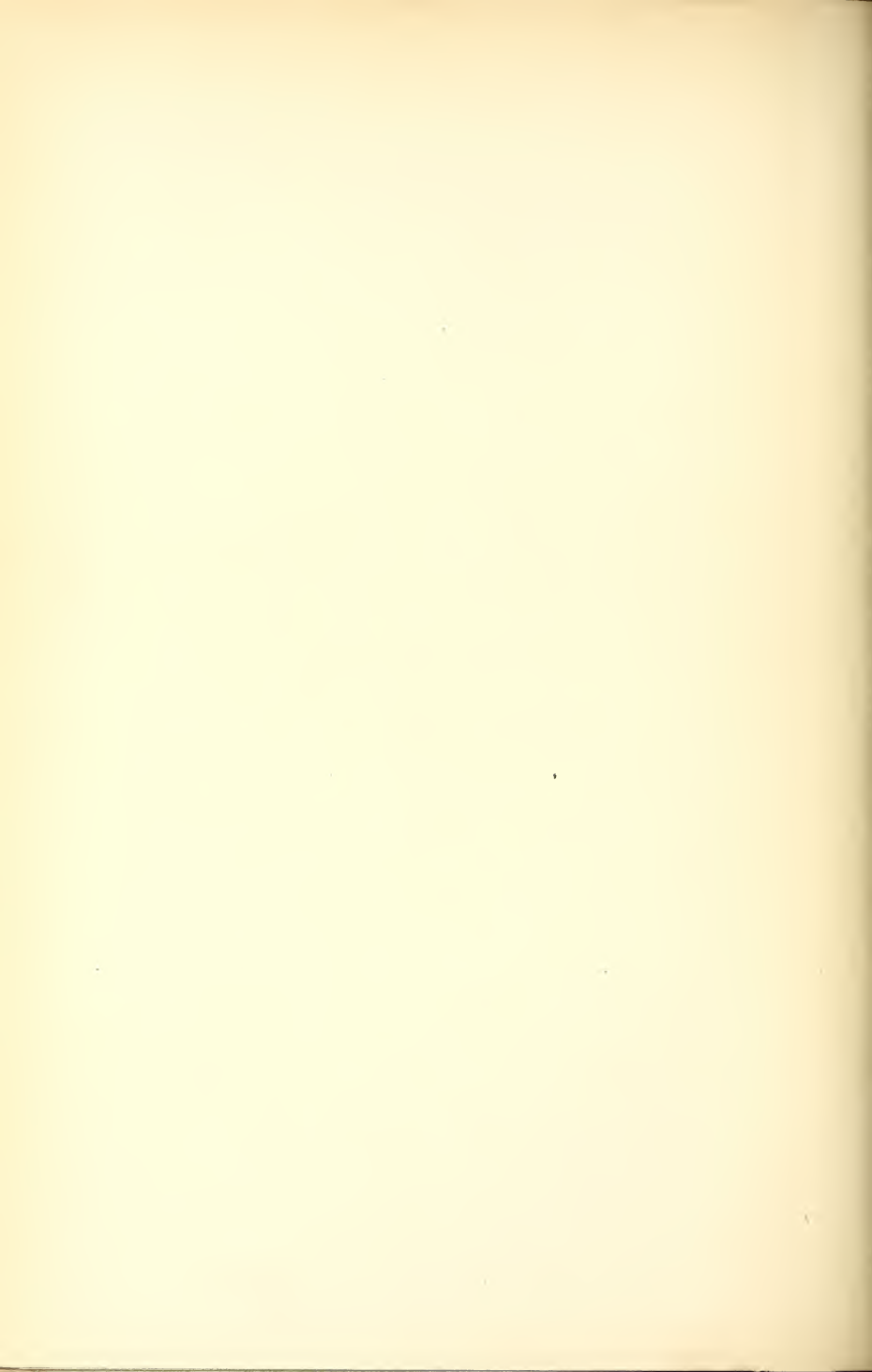
They concealed themselves cunningly in the alder cover that fringed the farther edge of the lake and when the buck scrambled out upon the bank dripping and panting, for a long swim is even harder work than a long run, they sprang upon him and pulled him to earth. There was a short desperate struggle in which he struck out valiantly with his hoofs, but he was quickly overpowered and as a wolf's fangs sank deep in his throat he ceased his hopeless struggles and was soon lying lifeless on the sandspit.

He had unwittingly paid for the safety of the old cow-moose and her calf with his own life.



CHAPTER III

THE MAKING OF A WILDERNESS
KING



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To the old moose-cow and the trembling calf, the fortune that sent the splendid buck to his untimely end was deliverance which came not a minute too soon, for the uneven battle that the wild mother had waged all night had left her blowing like a wheezy horse, and with barely strength to stand.

As soon as the last gray figure had slunk down the gulch and out of sight, she led little Moosie forth from their fortress and at once struck off through the foothills, going at right angles to the stream which they had been following.

Some instinct told her that the pack had left her and her calf for surer prey, and that they would not soon return. When they

did come back, the trail by which the two had left would be too old and cold to follow.

The night before they had journeyed leisurely down the gulch, but now it seemed to Moosie that his mother was most impatient. She loped along at a pace that made his long, awkward legs fairly wobble to keep up. Every few steps she would look back to see if he was dutifully following. But the experience through which they had just passed had so terrified the moose-calf that he dared do nothing else, and when the swift pace left him a few steps behind, his pitiful bleat soon warned the old cow that she was traveling too fast for her offspring.

The country in which they now found themselves was very rough, while along the stream it had been fairly smooth. Up precipitate banks and down into deep gulches they plunged. When the climb

was too steep for Moosie, his mother went behind and butted him up the declivity, all of which he considered rather rough treatment.

Soon they came to a fair-sized stream into which the old cow plunged, but Moosie stood shivering and uncertain on the bank. When she had reached the other side, the cow turned about to see if he was following, but he still stood on the farther bank, thrusting his homely nose wistfully toward her. Impatiently she returned to him and butted him unceremoniously into the stream. His head went under water, and for a second he bobbed about like a cork ; but the cow followed close behind and pushed him to the opposite bank, where he stood shaking and dripping, a very forlorn little figure. This was his first experience with water, but it was not his last, for that day they forded several small streams and crossed two or three swamps which were worse.

By the middle of the forenoon it seemed to Moosie that he could go no farther, but his mother still butted him along, for she had no wish to repeat the experience of the night before.

At last, leg-weary, panting, and entirely exhausted, Moosie lay down in a spruce thicket, and his wise mother, observing that he had really traveled as far as he could for the present, abided by his decision to halt. As soon as he saw this, he sprang up with more alacrity than one would have thought he possessed a moment before, and began to nurse greedily. The swift flight of the morning had left him no time or chance for meal-taking, which was a most important item in his present lank condition, and he was by this time fairly ravenous.

He sucked and butted away as long as his mother's udder would yield milk, and finally lay down to sleep, in a much more

contented frame of mind than he had been a few moments before.

His mother, too, lay down with her back to the wind and soon the two were resting quietly. The moose, while resting or sleeping, always lies with his back to the wind. He relies upon his good nose to tell him of any danger approaching from behind, while eyesight and hearing will serve him in the opposite direction. Thus all points of the compass are covered and there is no vulnerable quarter.

Just before sunset the old cow arose and breasted down a small moose-wood. Here she made her own supper of the swelling, succulent buds, while Moosie, not to be outdone, butted away at her flanks.

When the sapling had been stripped, she let it go up with a swish and again led the way across country in a new direction, which she knew would take them back to Indian River.

To Moosie, whose joints were stiff and whose legs were so weary that he could with difficulty make them travel, this seemed like downright hardship, which was as useless as it was hard ; but he dared not lag behind, for the long, purple shadows had begun stealing along the aisles of the forest, and the first stars had already pricked through the hazy spring sky. When, after about a half-hour's travel, he did finally lag behind, the old cow came back and butted him so severely that he pitched upon his head and went sprawling ; but she helped him up, caressing and mothering him with her long upper lip, and they again hurried through the gathering gloom. It was not until Moosie had once more become utterly exhausted that they stopped. This time it was upon a little knoll in a tamarack swamp, where the firs screened them nicely from curious eyes and kept off the fresh spring winds which were still quite keen at night.

The following morning, after the old cow had browsed and Moosie had also breakfasted, they again resumed their journey, this time in a rather more leisurely manner ; but even then, the cow's long lope was quite a stiff pace for the calf.

About noon they came into a broader and more open valley than Moosie had yet seen and the old cow knew that they were again back upon Indian River, the main stream leading to Lake Lonely, which was her favorite range and toward which sequestered spot she was now moving.

They worked their way up-stream gradually, going by easy stages to the lake. There was no hurry, for all the buds were now unfolding, and browsing was as good in one place as another ; besides it was a season in which to enjoy the freshness and the newness of mother earth leisurely, and not go racing to one's destination. The grass was greening, the fronds were unfolding, the

lily-pads were opening, and the early cow-slips were already lifting their golden chalices. The kingfisher was chattering and scolding by the stream. The first time that Moosie saw this noisy little fellow, he was sitting upon a dead limb watching for fish, and when he saw the newcomers wading up the stream, he evidently thought that the old cow and the small calf would scare them away. So the irate fisherman at once set up a great scolding, saying in the plainest kingfisher language that this was his particular stream, and they might wade in some other, to all of which Moosie listened in wide-eyed wonder, not even comprehending that he was the culprit.

After about a week of leisurely wandering, one evening, just at dusk, they came out on the banks of Lake Lonely, and Moosie beheld for the first time the shimmering, glimmering, dancing expanse of the wilderness lake, which was to figure so



THE KINGFISHER WAS CHATTERING AND SCOLDING



largely in his adventurous life. He at once waded knee-deep in the clear water and drank as though taking possession of his kingdom.

Moosie was standing contemplatively in the lake, wondering what made it shimmer so, when there was a hoarse, glad bleat in the bushes near by, and a tall, ungainly creature, many times larger than himself, came forth, and running up to the old cow, began rubbing noses with her in a joyous reunion. It was her calf who had been born the previous year, and had stayed with the rest of the moose-herd, when the old cow had stolen away up the little stream to the dingle dell where Moosie was born.

Soon the favorite of the year before, who had been most astonished and aggrieved at being forsaken by her mother, perceived Moosie, now standing near, and came at him, head down, to butt him into the lake.

The old cow quickly stepped between and

caressing Moosie affectionately with her nose, plainly told the newcomer that, although she had been first in the field, another was now first and a creature of importance, to be treated with consideration. Soon the tall, lank yearling, who was about four feet at the shoulder, and who would weigh perhaps two hundred and seventy-five pounds, gave up the idea of butting her small brother and nosed him curiously.

Although the yearling was again taken into the family circle, Moosie held first place, and the three came and went in and about the lake, and upon the several small streams which flowed into it, at their own sweet will, while the buds and blossoms of spring matured and the full glory of summer was spread like a voluptuous mantle over the land.

Little Moosie's life was a pleasant one, for they wandered as free as the winds that

blew. All the sweet, untamed wilderness was theirs, and they reveled in its beauty and lavishness.

Every morning at peep-o'-day they came forth from some thicket, where they had been spending the night, to feed. This was just getting-up time for the birds and their chirruping and twittering made a pleasing symphony.

At first, browsing or grazing did not much interest Moosie. Milk seemed quite good enough for his young calfhood days, but when the grass in open places became tall, he nibbled away at the tender heads and found that they were very good. Before the summer was over, he learned to munch lily-pads, and the very tenderest twigs of birch were also to his liking.

One hot day in midsummer he got hold of the leaves of a tall, rank growing plant, and chewed away vigorously for some time. Finally the old cow saw what he was eat-

ing, and she at once butted him away from it, and told him very plainly that it was to be let alone. But he was punished in still another way, for shortly after eating the cowbane, he became quite sick, and for hours stood under a bush, his head down, a thick dreul hanging from his lips and an awful feeling clutching him. Occasionally he had spells of vomiting, after which he would look more disconsolate than ever. Finally, toward night the effects of the poison wore off, but he did not take any supper even then, and for a day or two was not quite himself.

But he never forgot this particular plant, and whenever he saw it after that was very careful to let it alone. In fact, he did not like to feed anywhere near it for a long time. Perhaps he thought it might make him sick even without his touching it.

One day, while he was investigating some bushes on his own account, he made the

acquaintance of a very queer-looking animal, who was quite small, with a bushy tail, and black and white in color.

The little stranger, who Moosie did not know was a skunk, was digging into an ant-hill, and, being very much interested in what he was doing, did not see Moosie, who by this time had become quite playful, his favorite form of sport being butting. He would butt his yearling sister and also his mother. Even the bushes sometimes seemed to challenge him to a butting-match, but it was more in a spirit of inquiry that he walked into the bushes and put his nose down to smell this strange little creature.

The wood-pussy, however, was much interested in his ant-hill and had no mind to be disturbed, so he delivered his own best defense full in Moosie's face and eyes.

For a second, the homely little calf stood dazed and blinking. The pain in his eyes

was terrible, and like nothing he had experienced before. He had wept from smartweed in his eyes, and had once been stung by nettles, but this was a hundred times worse than either. With a bleat of pain, he ran to his mother, and the obnoxious odor at once made plain what had happened.

Her remedy was promptly applied, for she butted him before her until they reached the lake, and here she gave him a last shove that sent him head-first into the water, where he bobbed about like a cork. Again and again she ducked his head under, and each time he came up blowing and sputtering.

At last, by this heroic treatment, the odious-smelling fluid was washed from his eyes. The odor still clung to him for several days; but the scent was a constant reminder, so the lesson was well learned.

If little Moosie could have understood all

the wonderful things that he saw, and could have told about them, he could have disclosed many an interesting secret of the water-fowls that nested about the lake. He knew where there were several ducks' nests, and one day he trampled a setting of teals' eggs to bits, without even suspecting the mischief that he was doing. On another occasion he thrust his homely head into a sedge, where an old, gray goose was on her nest. She promptly delivered him a sharp blow on the nose with her wing and he hurriedly withdrew, having no wish to make the acquaintance of such rude birds.

One day, in early September, when the air had already become like a strong tonic, and slight evidences of frost were showing along the watercourses, Moosie had been wandering some distance from his mother, investigating as usual, when he discovered a very queer, bristling creature just in the act of climbing a hemlock-tree. The

stranger did not look formidable, and as Moosie of late had developed still further his very impolite butting habit, he thought he would try his powers upon this bristly fellow.

The porcupine on his part was not thinking of moose-calf, or anything else except the hemlock bark that he would strip from the tree he was climbing, once he had gotten up where it was tender.

His quills were not standing erect as they are in his most irate moments, else Moosie's punishment would have been more painful. He struck the porcupine squarely in the middle of the back, even before this sleepy fellow had discovered that he was threatened, and he fell to earth with a grunt ; but the tumble brought every quill upon his body to the bristling point, and his tail shot upward, filling Moosie's nose with the terrible quills.

His first impulse was to stamp upon the

bristling fellow, as he had seen his mother do upon the wolf, but the pain in his nose soon conquered him, and he ran to the old cow. She at once saw the mistake which her offspring had made in attacking a porcupine, and began rubbing her nose against a tree. Moosie followed her example, and soon rubbed out all the quills but one. The process hurt him considerably, but this was a part of his punishment and helped him to learn the lesson.

But Moosie's most thrilling adventure of that autumn came late in September, just before the rutting season, when the forest had hung out a few of its scarlet and golden streamers, but had not donned its full robes of glory.

The cow and the calf were in a little run-way about a mile back from the lake. The old cow was feeding upon a birch sapling which she had bent down under her fore-leg in the accustomed manner. Moosie was

poking about, nosing the weed-tops, and nibbling those that his instinct told him might be good to eat, when a strong, menacing odor filled his nostrils. He had so often seen the old cow test the wind with wide-extended nostrils that he had unconsciously acquired the habit of smelling the wind critically whenever it seemed tainted. This particular smell he did not like. It somehow filled him with fear, yet fascinated him. He wanted to flee away but was powerless to do so.

About the same time that Moosie first noticed the new, strange scent, the old cow ceased her browsing, while her great trumpet ears were thrust forward inquiringly and her nostrils extended and drew hard upon the autumn wind. It took her but a few seconds, however, to decide, and a moment later she let go of the birch, upon which she was feeding, and began a stealthy search for her calf.



AT THAT INSTANT THE OLD FURY WAS UPON HIM

While Moosie was still hesitating between flight and going forward, a large, black form sprang through the bushes, and a terrible blow upon the shoulder laid him flat. His bleat of pain and terror brought the old cow crashing through the undergrowth, not a second too soon, for the young bear, who had been stalking the moose-calf, had already opened his jaws to close them upon the helpless calf's throat. At that instant, however, the old fury was upon him, and as he was only a two-year old, weighing less than a hundred pounds, his fate would have been sealed then and there, had it not been for his fat, which stood him in good stead. As it was, he slipped and rolled about under her hoofs, striking and biting, but being terribly punished all the time. At last, in a desperate fright and being mauled nearly to death, he scurried off into the bushes, glad enough to escape so easily.

When poor Moosie struggled to his feet,

he found that his shoulder had been so lamed by the blow that he could not touch one foot to the ground, so he limped painfully after his mother into the thicket near by, and there lay very quiet for several days, while nature restored his bruised and strained member.

This lesson had cost him the most pain and annoyance of any that he had yet been taught, but he had learned the scent of bear once for all. In after years, he amply avenged this injury done him in his weakness, but this was when he was a mighty king, with broad, spreading antlers, and a bellow that shook the hilltops.

One bright night the full fulgency of the harvest-moon and the myriads of twinkling star-lamps had transformed Lake Lonely into a glittering, shimmering, almost phosphorescent wonder-lake. The first ducks were winnowing their way southward, and the wilderness was cloaked in its most gor-

geous robes of scarlet, crimson and yellow. Little Moosie was standing in the placid waters near shore, leisurely eating lily-pads and enjoying to its full the coolness and freshness of autumn, when out of the stillness broke a deep and mighty bellow. It came from across the lake, nearly two miles away, but was so full-chested and sonorous that it seemed very near at hand.

Little Moosie threw up his head and his great homely ears were thrust forward, as though to catch the sound when it should be repeated. Directly it floated to them again, the old cow lifted her head, and after listening intently for some time, sent back an answering bellow, more prolonged than that of the stranger, but thinner and higher-keyed.

The echoes of her call had barely died away among the foothills, when the response boomed across the lake. Twice and thrice it was repeated, and the cow seemed .

satisfied with her experiment, as she again resumed her cropping of lily-pads.

Soon the bellow sounded much nearer, and from the new position, it was clear that he was coming around the lake, as it was a long swim across, and the newcomer seemed in hot haste.

From time to time the bellow that rolled so magnificently across the water was repeated, but only once more did the old cow make response. She evidently thought that she had done her part, and that it now rested with her lord to seek her out. This he seemed willing enough to do, judging from the thrashing and crashing in the underbrush.

When the sound had drawn to within a quarter of a mile of where the two were feeding, the old cow hastily hid Moosie in the bushes near by and then she resumed her feeding.

It was not long before the great bull came

crashing into the open, blowing, snorting, and quivering with eagerness for the mate that he had sought so persistently.

To Moosie, concealed in his thicket near by, he seemed like a veritable mountain, and his broad antlers resting upon his shoulders made him look quite different from the old cow. He went trotting up to her, his hoofs clacking like castanets, and thrust his muzzle against hers.

Then in a most ungallant manner he raked her across the shoulders with his antlers, and stamped upon the ground, as much as to say, "Why did you give me so much trouble, and where have you been hiding all these many days?"

The great bull was so tall and blew so loudly through his nostrils that he frightened the calf, and it was probably well for him that he kept out of the way, for the surly old moose might have taken it into his head to kill him had he appeared, espe-

cially as he was a male calf. This frequently happens, even among smaller and milder members of the deer family, who seem to regard the small males as rivals.

After this night Moosie saw much of the old bull, although his visits were uncertain. It might be at evening, as they were luxuriating in the cold waters, or it might be in the early morning when they were feeding. Whenever the lordly stranger appeared, Moosie usually slipped away into a thicket and kept quiet until he had gone.

At last, one crisp November morning, the old monarch came upon them suddenly when they were engaged in feeding, and before Moosie had time to slip away, he was discovered. But the old king seemed to be in a good mood this morning, for he sniffed tolerantly at the calf and after that Moosie was not afraid of him, but accepted him as one of the family.

When the snows came, the broad-antlered

bull took command of the little herd and led them away to the southward, to the old yarding-place at the junction of two smaller streams with Indian River.

The first snowfall was most interesting to Moosie. He could not make out what it was. It was so cold and white, and so changed the look of the landscape. But the rest of the herd seemed to take the snow very much as a matter of course, so Moosie followed their example. Besides, he did get considerable fun out of capering up and down in the well-trodden snow-paths of the yard. Here he soon learned to forage for browse like the rest, and when the browse was too high for him, the great bull very considerably bent down saplings and would sometimes even permit him to browse upon a sapling that he had for himself.

Moosie did miss his year-and-a-half old sister, who had become a fine heifer by this

time, and had strayed away from the rest of the herd, probably in answer to the mating instinct, which she had felt in her blood with the reddening of the first moose-wood.

It had been great sport to butt with her, Moosie having become a very promising calf, and nearly a match for the young heifer. Even the tall bull seemed to look upon him with favor. Perhaps he recognized at this early day that he would some day be a mighty bull, the spread of whose antlers, and the fury of whose challenge would make all rivals shrink away in fear, once they had learned his prowess, and been humbled by his strength.

So, while the winds howled and shrieked in the tree-tops, and the snows sifted silently down, the little moose-herd kept their paths open, and the forest furnished plenty of tender, juicy browse. Often the trees were covered with frost, or loaded down to break-

ing with snow, but the lord of the forest did not mind ; his great strength and his cunning were a match for the elements. So, when spring came they were still in good condition, although the undergrowth about the yard had been stripped clean.

One spring morning, when the buds were just beginning to redden on the soft maple, Moosie missed his mother, and for an hour or two ran hither and yon, bleating and staring wild-eyed into each thicket. Finally, after an hour or two of fruitless search, he gave up looking, thinking that she would probably return in her own good time ; but the day passed and another and another, without his discovering any signs of her. He had become very lonely by the third day ; he was so lonely that he did not care to browse. Just at sunset he started to follow up one of the small streams, again searching for her, when he met her returning, and following in her wake was just as

homely and ridiculous a little moose-calf as Moosie himself had been the year before. So here was the cause of all Moosie's troubles. With an angry snort he rushed at the calf, and before his mother could interfere, sent the wobbly newcomer sprawling. But the old cow pushed him unceremoniously into the bushes for the deed, and would hardly look at him for a day.

His nose was clearly broken, and for several days he was quite discomfited, but by degrees he was reconciled to the new calf, and they soon went back to Lake Lonely, where the summer was passed in much the same manner as the previous one.

About midsummer, Moosie began growing his first set of antlers. At the start they were ridiculous little knobs, but he was as proud of them as any bull could have been of a full set. Even when the autumn months came with their scarlet and golden streamers, these spike-horns were but a

mere apology for antlers, though the young bull wearing them grew confident and proud beyond his age and strength. In fact, he became a great swaggerer and a belligerent blusterer, and as is usual in such cases, soon came to grief.

One moonlight night in early October a morose old bull wandered into the region and startled the quiet of the lake with his mighty bellows. All confidence, bluster and ignorance, Moosie rushed off to find him. In stature he was the equal of a two-year-old, and the newcomer mistook him for a real formidable rival.

The young blusterer came upon the seasoned fighter in the deep cover, and almost before he knew what had happened, he was being borne back through the underbrush, bushes and sapling cracking and breaking as they went, and the old fury's horns were wounding him in a dozen places. At last, Moosie was tumbled down a precipitate bank

into a deep gulch, where he lay kicking and sprawling. This accident probably saved his hide, as the old bull stood upon the high bank, bellowing and stamping, not thinking it worth his while to take the plunge down to such an insignificant foe. At last, the wounded and bleeding blusterer got to his feet and limped humbly away, his swagger and fight all gone.

This thrashing so humiliated him, that he left the region that night and went down the river to the old yarding-place, where the rest of the herd found him a month or two later.

CHAPTER IV
THE CRACK OF DOOM



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THE CRACK OF DOOM

ONE twilight in early March, when the frigidity of old winter had begun to soften, and the breath of the wind was tempered to a pleasant freshness, Moosie was getting his supper upon a birch browse that he had bent down for the purpose.

It had been an easy winter and the little herd were in fine condition. This was especially true of Moosie, who had added two or three inches to his stature and had lost none of his autumn flesh. His confidence in his own might and prowess had also grown. The memory of his sorrowful experience in the late fall, when the big bull had rolled him down into the bottom of the gulch, and all but killed him, had become

so dim that it no longer terrified or angered him.

The bull in whose yard he had passed the winter was most tolerant of him and nothing had occurred in several months to check his growing pride and assurance. So while he browsed away at the birch he was filled with complacency, for was he not the largest and the most courageous two-year-old that had ever ranged upon the confines of Indian River, or had come and gone about Lake Lonely?

Presently he backed away from the birch which he was holding down under his foreleg and let it go up with a quick swish. The sapling struck his queer little horns a sharp blow as it brushed past his head, and like the milkmaid in the fable, in a second his vanity and pride had taken a mighty tumble, for his sorry little horns fell off and lay at his feet, leaving him astonished, ashamed, and afraid of what had befallen

him. He had seen the old bull shed his horns a whole week before, but that did not trouble him. His own set had seemed inseparable and he had not so much as thought that he, too, might be called upon to part with this sign of sovereignty.

For a moment he gazed ruefully at his discarded members. Then he stooped to his knees and smelled them, and finally, rising to his full height, he stamped upon them as punishment for playing him so mean a trick.

Moosie was so humiliated at his loss that he wandered away to a distant part of the yard and kept apart from the rest of the herd for several days. As soon as the snow would permit, he left and went upon a journey, which brought him many strange experiences before he again looked upon the scenes of his calfhood.

Snow still lay in all the hollows and along the north side of the woods where the

sunlight did not strike it, but along the sunny slopes the earth was quite bare. The rest of the herd would probably stick to the yarding-place for a week or two longer, but a strange restlessness was upon Moosie. He was all out of sorts with everything since the irreparable shedding of his antlers. He wanted to place as many miles between himself and the scene of his loss as possible. He did not care to make new friends and acquaintances, but he simply wished to go on his way in a sullen rage with himself and all the rest of creation.

The loss of his horns made him feel quite defenseless, like a knight who has lost his spear; but he could still strike with his sharp-cutting hoofs, and the first day of his travels he stamped a porcupine to jelly, taking care not to get any of the quills in his feet. This could hardly have been accomplished had not his first blow rolled the poor porcupine over upon his back, expos-

ing his defenseless belly to the sledge-hammer blows of his adversary.

When Moosie stooped down and got a better whiff of his victim, he knew that it was the creature who had punished him so sorely when he was a small calf, and he felt well satisfied with his revenge.

Although there were many twists and turns in Moosie's trail, the general direction that he took was to the south. Often there were stops of several days in localities that pleased him, or where the feed was especially good. He also frequently retraced his steps and wandered back along the trail by which he had come. By the first of May, he was sixty miles farther south than he had been in March, and much too near the habitat of man for his own safety. That no serious accident befell him, was due partly to his good luck and to the closed season; also to the fact that he did not meet any backwoodsman who wanted moose-

muzzle. The law really is not as protective in the wilderness regions as is usually thought, for whenever the backwoods people want meat they get it, and consider it legitimate plunder.

One evening in early May Moosie came out into a clearing which was like no other open place that he had ever seen. All the trees were broken off just a foot or two above the ground and the smaller limbs and twigs from their tops were scattered about in all directions. It was not a wind-fall, for he had passed through one the week before, but something had certainly devastated the forest in a peculiar manner.

He was still standing by one of the wood-choppers' freshly fallen trees, trying to decide what it all meant, when a new scent, repugnant and menacing, came to his nostrils. Without any apparent reason, it filled him with rage and fear. The mane

upon his neck and back stood erect, and his small eyes blazed.

Then, without a second's warning, a bright flame leaped from a bush near by, a deafening roar filled the woods and a biting pain stung Moosie in a score of places along his side. With a snort of fear and astonishment he wheeled and dashed away in the opposite direction from that in which the smoke had appeared.

When the young moose had gone, a man and a boy of perhaps fifteen years came forth from their hiding-place behind a woodpile. The boy was greatly excited, and the man was chuckling with mirth.

"Didn't think I would do anything more than tickle his hide a bit," he said. "Didn't hev in anything but squirrel-shot. But didn't he jest skedaddle? He won't stop running for half a day, without he plunges into some lake or river to take out

the shot sting; but he was a mighty fine bull, for a young 'un."

As the old woodsman predicted, when he had run two or three miles, Moosie plunged into a lake, to cool the burning and stinging of the shot-wounds. He had been stung with bees, when he had been a calf, but bee-stings were nothing to this.

When he had stayed in the water for an hour or so, he came out and put many miles between him and the scene of his mishap. He had bought a little useful experience and had not paid too dearly for it. He had learned the man-scent and his fire-stick that kills like the lightning.

This experience at once put Moosie on guard against both man and his deadly weapon, and perhaps saved him more serious injury. But in this new country the signs of man were so plentiful that he journeyed half-way back to Lake Lonely, and then struck off at right angles to Indian

River, following a smaller tributary, until he found himself in a wild and heavily-wooded region, far from the haunts of this new, strange creature.

Here through July and August the young moose lived a wholly satisfactory existence. At morning and evening, and late in the afternoon, he cropped lily-pads or browsed, as suited his appetite; while during the hotter part of each day he went into the deep woods to escape the deer-flies, the mosquitoes, and the gnats which at times were almost intolerable. Sometimes these pests became so bad that Moosie would find a deep place in the stream that he frequented and lie entirely submerged in the water, just showing his muzzle every minute or two in order to take breath. In this way he was able entirely to elude the little furies which swarmed about him in clouds.

The moose, and all the members of the deer family, are in a sorry plight when the

flies are at their worst. Nature has not provided them with a tail suitable for switching, so about all they can do is either to go to the deep woods or take refuge in the water.

About the only use that a deer's tail seems to serve is as a little white flag which the fawn may follow upon dark nights when the mother deer, startled by some foe, leads it through the woods at a breakneck pace to safety.

All the weeds and grasses, from whose tender and juicy heads Moosie delighted to nibble, grew in abundance in this new place into which he had wandered, and all his favorite browse was also found here, so he was in a veritable land of milk and honey.

The only other moose that came into his domain were a cow and a calf who shared the range with him, and he tolerated them, though he would probably have had hard work to drive the cow away, even had he been disposed to do so.

The young bull would very likely have sought a mate and returned to Lake Lonely in the early fall, had not something happened the last of August that gave him a most remarkable experience for a moose.

No rain had fallen for several weeks, and the foliage upon the soft maples had begun to turn a month before its time. The grasses were all brown and weeds that were usually a deep luxuriant green had turned a sickly yellow. The blackberries had dried up on the bushes without ripening. Streams were very low and the smaller brooks were merely a series of shallow pools, with a dry bed of rock and sand between. It was great fishing, though, for mink and otter, who had merely to plunge into a pool, where the fish were at their mercy, and gorge themselves.

Upon the particular afternoon in question it was peculiarly still. Not a breath seemed stirring. The sky was a brazen, pitiless yel-

low, as void of rain signs as a desert. The air was hot and suffocating, without the slightest moisture in it, for even the dews had ceased to fall during this insufferable drouth.

Late in the afternoon a dark bank of thunder-heads rolled up against the setting sun, which shot them through with blood-red light. In every direction the sun radiated waterspouts of bloody red, and a ghastly yellow. Farther out on the spokes this great red wheel was pink and green and saffron. Soon a distant rumbling was heard and bright daggers of chain lightning shot the diabolical sunset through and through.

Then, although there was not a breath of wind, the topmost points upon hemlock and pines began to quiver and shudder as if their sensitive needles had a premonition of winds so mighty that the trees trembled even at the thought of them. The birds

flew to their perches and nests, crying out in alarm as they went. The rabbits and foxes skurried into hiding and although there was still no wind, the tree-tops began moaning softly to themselves, as if chanting a wild, weird miserere.

Moosie noted all these signs of earth, air and sky, and they made him uneasy. He was not afraid, for there was nothing in the elements in his own experience to be afraid of, but the wind whispered something in his great trumpet-like ear and it wigwagged nervously. His nostrils were also extended to their full width that they might test the freshening wind. As the limbs upon the trees began thrashing and the winds howled in the pine-tops, he trotted up and down the stream uncertain. Then, concluding that the deep woods offered the best cover, he thrust his nose forward, and trotted into the forest, which was now as dark as midnight.

Up among the lightning-cracked clouds, on the outer edge of the storm, a great bald eagle battled with the winds, screaming wildly in defiance, bravely beating his way homeward to his nest in a distant mountain-top. From his height he looked down upon the demoniacal elements and saw them smite the ancient forest.

Whirling and seething in terrible contortions, a huge funnel-shaped cloud was dragging its tail of fire in which the lightning played constantly, through the deep woods. First-growth maples and sturdy beeches; tall sentinel pines that pierced the sky like the mainmast of a ship; hemlock and spruce, that had defied the winds for more than a century, were hopping about like jack-straws and bending and breaking like reeds. None was so strong or so stiff of back that it could stand up against the king of the winds, so he leveled all in his path.

Many a forest monarch, two centuries old

and a hundred and twenty-five feet in height, gripped mother earth with his hooked hands, stiffened his back and sought to stand against the king of the winds; but all were laid low and in many cases their upturned roots, still holding tons of earth, stood ten feet high when the king had passed, while the hole that yawned where they had stood a minute before was large enough for a small cellar.

Down upon the particular belt of woods, in which Moosie had taken refuge, swooped the very heart of the storm. The roaring of the winds and the crash of falling trees were like the continuous roll of the heaviest thunder. For a few seconds the terrified young moose was able to keep his feet and he fled before the winds, being buffeted from side to side. Then a mighty pine fell athwart his pathway, and another fell behind him, while a maple crashed down between them, completely burying the forest

fugitive. He was knocked to earth and imprisoned in a broken, twisted mass of branches, as completely as though he had been caught in a cattle corral ; while with a bellow, a roar, a shriek and a whoop, the rattle of thunder and the crash of breaking trees, the king of the winds swept on.

For a few seconds the young moose was too terrified, bewildered and stunned even to struggle under the mountain of forest that had fallen upon him. He lay upon one side gasping, trying to get back the breath knocked out of him by the windfall, from which he had been lucky to escape without a broken back.

He could hear the frightful howling, shrieking and moaning of the demoniacal winds, and the deafening crash and heart-rending groan of the forest, as its mighty trees were either torn up by the roots or their strong backs broken ; and if anything more was needed to add to the destruction

of the ancient woods, it was found in the deadly bolts of lightning that played constantly in the funnel-shaped cloud, although the ear-splitting crack of the thunder was hardly audible above the roar of the elements.

At last the storm, which had come up so quickly, passed, and only the fretful moaning and sighing of the still agitated winds wailed a dirge for the dearth and desolation in the ancient forest. No more would it sigh in the fragrant green plumes of these fallen monarchs.

A sense of being pressed to earth, of being a prisoner under a mountain of fallen trees, was soon borne in on Moosie. Before he had been too dazed and stunned to appreciate his pitiful plight, and he now began struggling frantically to free himself from the interlacing boughs and branches that extended in every direction in a twisted, interwoven mass. By dint of much

wriggling this way and that, he at last got to his knees and finally managed to thrash and beat his way out to a little opening in the débris. Here he could stand erect and by most uncomfortable contortions turn about, but that was all. So many trees had fallen in this one spot, that their tops were piled twenty or thirty feet high, and were so interwoven that the prison in which Moosie now found himself was as complete as though a series of piles had been driven down about him, making a circle.

There was blue sky above him and daylight and sweet wilderness air; there were sunlight and dewfall, but little food and no water. The food he could go without for a time, but in the stifling August heat his thirst was worse than the hunger and the flies and the terror of being held in this frightful manner all put together.

As time went on, he reached through all the cracks and openings in his prison-wall

for twigs and withering pine-plumes. When these had been eaten, he reared upon his hind legs and cropped all the plumes that he could reach standing. After this limited supply of browse had been exhausted, he began stripping off the bark. Ordinarily, he would have eaten only the very tenderest, but now any coarse, rough stuff would do. When all the bark in reach was gone, he began gnawing at the wood.

A mule, when hitched to a cottonwood, will often make quite a meal out of the soft, fibrous wood, and now poor Moosie was reduced to a diet of sawdust.



CHAPTER V
THE HORNED HORSE



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FOR nineteen horrible, endless days Moosie, starved and famished in his strange pen-trap, watched the sun rise and set, the stars appear, the storms come and go. Then something happened that was as extraordinary as his captivity.

By this time he was so weak that he could hardly stand. In fact, he spent nearly all the weary hours lying down. His bones thrust their prominent ends against the skin as though just a little more of starvation would puncture it. He was no longer the well-fed, sleek two-year-old of a few days before, but a gigantic skeleton.

About the middle of the forenoon of the nineteenth day of his captivity, a fresh whiff of wind brought him the peculiar

taint that he had smelled in the opening where the trees had been cut and slashed in so queer a manner, the day he first heard and felt the power of the thunder-stick.

Presently as Moosie gazed listlessly between his prison-bars, he saw a quiet, erect creature approaching. This stranger, whose scent blew so fresh into the young moose's nostrils, was jumping from tree-trunk to tree-trunk, inspecting and measuring a tree here and there, and occasionally stopping to make notes in a small book, carried in his pocket for the purpose.

The man was a timber cruiser for one of the great Northern lumber companies. He was inspecting and estimating the windfall, preliminary to the purchase of the same by his company.

Presently he sprang upon the trunk of the great pine that lay athwart the place of Moosie's captivity. Then he stopped and

gazed down into the homely, wistful face of the nearly dead bull. The strange two-legged creature was so amazed that he nearly fell off his perch in his excitement. A low cry and whistle of astonishment escaped him. Then he reached down and caressed the moose's nose with the scale that he carried in his hand.

The long upper lip reached for the stick to see if it were edible and the erect creature seemed to understand, for he at once began breaking off browse and throwing it down to the starved bull. For several minutes the man busied himself in this manner until he had gathered a generous supply. Then he stood erect and putting his hands to his face, uttered a peculiar cry.

The call was answered from a distance and a second man came jumping from tree-trunk to tree-trunk. This was none other than the old guide, Sandy McPherson, who was helping the timber cruiser.

"I've got something to show you, Sandy," said the first-comer. "I am going to give you the pleasure of putting your hand upon the head of a two-year-old live bull-moose. What do you think of that?"

"I think it maist be one of your practical jokes, Mr. McDonald," replied Sandy. "I dinna remember ever putting my hand upon a live bull-moose and I hardly expect to now, at my time o' life."

"Well, look down there," said the man called McDonald. "I think that a pretty good specimen for a half-starved moose. He's pretty much all in, but he is still worth looking at."

For a few seconds Sandy gazed wide-eyed and open-mouthed at the poor captive, too dumbfounded and astonished even to speak. At last he found his tongue and ejaculated:

"Say, mon, but he's a fine beastie, though he's nearly dead with hunger and thirst. I can hardly keep my hands off him, but I

wager he'll be mair grateful to me if I'll go and fetch him some water, than if I was to stand here goppin' at him all the forenoon."

Suiting the action to the word, Sandy went the way he had come and soon returned, bringing the camp-kettle brimming with water, which he had taken from the stream near by. This stream had been Moosie's very own in the early summer and its low purling, suggesting cool, deep pools, had so often come to his ears during the last long days of torment.

Sandy clambered down into the opening beside the ungainly, raw-boned creature and held the kettle while Moosie drank. Six times he went to the stream and filled it before the poor sufferer was satisfied. When he had finished drinking, the grateful moose let his long, soft upper lip pass caressingly over the hard hands of the woodsman, and the Scotchman caressed his nose in return. Down at the bottom of

this pen in the midst of the windfall was cemented a friendship as extraordinary as was ever recorded between man and beast.

To Moosie the stranger was the very embodiment of rescue in the hour of his extremity. He was both meat and drink, while to old McPherson there was something so ridiculous and yet so attractive in this awkward, ungainly deer that his heart went out to him as it might have to a dog or a horse.

When in the afternoon Mr. McDonald proposed that they shoot the unfortunate moose, and thus end his sufferings, Sandy was as indignant as though the timber cruiser had proposed to shoot one of his own family.

"Shoot that moose, mon? I dinna think so. It's Sandy McPherson that you will have to reckon with if you attempt to shoot that moose."

"What will we do with him, let him

starve?" asked the other. "We can't stay here forever feeding and watering him; we have lost considerable time already."

"I dinna ken what you think about it," replied Sandy, "but I am going to chop him out. He's worth it, even if I hadn't taken a liking to him; but if I can get him safe and sound back to civilization and fattened up a bit, he's worth a hundred dollars. You know my bairn Donald is goin' to take that Dundee and St. Clair mail-route this fall, and he'll make the finest kind of a horse for such a long pull. It is sixty miles round trip, an' if he was in condition, I think he'd do it in a day instead of two days, the time they make with a horse."

"Well," replied the timber cruiser, "it's almost a hopeless task, but I'll give you this afternoon on it. I wouldn't do that only a Scotchman's mind is as sot as the Rock of Gibraltar and perhaps that's the quickest way out."

"It's a good heart you hev, mon," replied the old Scotchman warmly. "I'll hev him out in time to go to supper."

Sandy set to work with a will, but as the cruiser had predicted, it was quite an undertaking. Limb after limb he lopped off, only to find that new difficulties confronted him.

Moosie stared up at the queer creature who hacked away so persistently, for a long time wondering what it meant. From time to time his new friend called down encouragingly to him, "I'm coming, my fine beastie. It's a hard pull, but I think we'll fetch it. Anyhow, he shan't shoot you just yet."

Sandy also went frequently to the brook and filled the camp-kettle. The poor moose had gone so long without water that now he seemed to soak it up like a sponge. Sandy also kept him generously supplied with browse, so although he ate little, for

one who was nearly starved, yet his world looked brighter than it had for many a day.

When the shadows of twilight stole over the windfall, there were still two large logs to cut before it would even be possible to make an attempt to get the wasted prisoner out. Long after the stars appeared, the whack, whack of the Scotchman's axe sounded above the night cries of the wilderness and it was nearly ten o'clock when the last log settled with a heavy thud and there was a chance of freedom for the unfortunate moose.

"Guess I'll let him stay where he is to-night," Sandy remarked as he plodded wearily to camp and turned in for the night.

By daylight things looked much brighter for Moosie, for by that time the timber cruiser had caught the old Scotchman's enthusiasm and volunteered to help get him out of his strange predicament.

It took the combined strength of the two men, pulling and hauling, and lifting the sadly weakened animal with a lever, working across an overhanging limb, before they made much headway.

At last the gaunt sufferer seemed to understand what was going on, and, although he could hardly stand from weakness, he doubled and twisted through Sandy's narrow defile in a manner that astonished both men.

"Look a' that, mon," cried Sandy, as the moose got down upon his knees and wriggled through under an overhanging tree-trunk. "I tell you he's got brains. If I can only get him strengthened up a bit and back to Dundee."

After many tortuous twistings and turnings and several bad scrapes upon his back and side, Moosie stood trembling and swaying, dazed and uncertain, but once more as free as on that fateful afternoon over two

weeks before when the hurricane had overtaken him with such disastrous results.

But his freedom was not the same, for in some strange way he was now indissolubly attached to this man creature who had delivered him, and who now rubbed his nose and fondled his long ears in a way that reminded him of his own wild mother in the old calfhood days.

When he had sufficiently feasted his eyes upon his prize, the Scotchman led the famished creature down to the brook where he waded knee-deep in the cool sweet water and drank his fill.

Sandy then considered how he could secure his new charge while he went for his day's work in the windfall. But Mr. McDonald assured him that the moose would not go a dozen rods away in his weakened condition. "Don't you see how he follows you with his eyes, every move you make? He's yours all right."

Reluctantly Sandy left Moosie to keep camp and went away into the timber, but as the cruiser had said, he did not wander far and when they returned at noon they found him peacefully sleeping in a clump of bushes near by.

For three days the two men worked in the vicinity of Moosie's disaster, but on the fourth morning they started back to the settlement, the Scotchman leading the gaunt, sorrowful-looking moose by means of a rope, which he had made out of the tough elm bark. The rope was hardly necessary, for the great homely brute followed him like a dog and was as well behaved and tractable as a steer would have been under the same conditions. Although, the largest and, when aroused, the most terrible of all the deer family, the moose is also the cleverest of all his kind, once he has been domesticated.

Toward noon the queer company emerged

into a smooth straight path, dusty and well-worn. This was Moosie's first experience with a traveled road, but it was not his last, for in the new life to which he was going, miles of this smooth trail were to be his daily stint.

Soon a queer contrivance drawn by a creature not as tall as himself, but quite as heavy, came rattling along. Moosie stood by the roadside, staring wide-eyed at this new apparition, while the horse, snorting and plunging, dashed by. This was another strange experience for the bewildered moose. He had met his first team, but in the months to come, it was his delight to rattle by these quick-stepping creatures, who could dash by him in a short run, but who were no match for him when he squared away for a long, hard pull.

The forenoon of the second day, they arrived at Dundee and the Scotchman led his queer steed up in front of a dingy

little shop and had him measured for a harness. This was rather simple, consisting of a breast-strap and tugs, a saddle to support the shafts and a huge bridle for the great homely head.

Two days later, the harness was completed and Sandy began the process of breaking the tall steed. This was a much easier task than it might have been, for in Moosie's emaciated condition, he was as docile as a calf. The fire had all gone out of his eye, and he seemed perfectly willing to do the bidding of his new master in all things.

In two weeks' time the young moose had been nicely broken, through the patience and persistence of old Sandy and the petting and coaxing of his son, Donald McPherson. It was partly on Donald's account that old Sandy had taken so much pains to liberate the captive.

Young McPherson was a muscular, ath-

letic boy of seventeen, full of animal spirit, and fond of outdoor life, a hunter and a trapper of repute ; and his father knew well that the novelty of owning and driving a moose would appeal to his love of adventure.

Besides all this, Sandy had also seen that the moose might prove a most valuable domesticated animal in carrying the mails over the stage-route which he had just taken that summer.

This mail-route had been for the past year the dream of Donald's life. It was a long, hard pull, over rough, wild country, but the way was full of interest for the keen eyes of a young man whose instinct for out-of-door life was as strong as young McPherson's. Hitherto the stage-route had been run by two relays of horses, but now Sandy and Donald had dreams of doing it in a light rig, with the moose alone.

"Look o' the stride on him, will you, mon?" exclaimed old Sandy excitedly.

"He's twice as long-gaited as the tallest, longest-legged horse that ever stood up. I tell you, boy, he's going to be a great traveler. Of course he's all run down now, an' the heart gone out of him, but you just wait a little and he'll turn out to be the greatest horse in New Brunswick."

The vehicle in which the horned horse was to be driven was a high-wheeled sulky, with an ample body under the seat where might be stowed the mail-pouches and also innumerable small parcels; for it was a part of the mail-carrier's business to do little errands for the people along the way, but not to take passengers.

Donald and the moose liked each other from the very first. The boy would run his hands caressingly over the soft, jelly-like nose of the ungainly animal and lay his cheek against his face, and the moose would pass his long, drooping upper lip over the boy's face in return.

"I think I will call him Shovelhorns; his horns look something like a shovel," he said one day, and the name stuck.

The young mail-carrier could not have been prouder, had he held reins over the best pair of Morgan thoroughbreds in Canada, than he was over his tall, striding moose.

"I tell you, Mr. McGinnis, he's the horse for me. There'll be a new record in these parts for mail-carrying or my name isn't Donald McPherson." This boast was made to the notary on the morning of the first trip. "He's a dear homely old trotter. Go lang, Shovelhorns!"

In answer to the call from his master, the moose stuck his nose straight out in front, let his antlers rest easily on his shoulders, and struck off down the road at his long, shuffling trot. At first it seemed as though he did not travel very fast, but as one noted the ease with which he did it and the long,

tireless stride, it was apparent at a glance that he was a good horse for a long journey.

He had started on his first trip over the route at seven o'clock in the morning, and Donald had sung out to all the loungers at the store and small shops as they passed that he would be back by sunset.

Excitement ran high as to whether he could do it. The round trip was sixty miles and there was not a horse in Dundee that would have been equal to it. A good horse might be expected to make the journey in a long day's drive, but between sun and sun was too short a time for any horse.

Several wagers had been made and Louis Lafleur, a wizened-up little Canuck, had agreed to eat a peck of raw oats at the tavern, if the horned horse, as they called him, came into Dundee before sunset.

The road wound for five miles along the Chacootee Valley, following close to the river of that name, through deep, sweet-

scented glooms of cedar and balsam, spruce and pine. Here the blue shadows, splashed with patches of sunlight, were most interesting, for these primeval woods were teeming with wild-life. Grouse scurried into the ferns and witch-hazel at their approach; rabbits hopped across the road ahead of them, or squatted under a bush until they passed; squirrels and jays chattered and scolded overhead.

There were sights, too, along this wilderness way to make the nerves of any lad tingle, for it was not uncommon to see the gray silent shape of a bobcat, or the more reddish coat of a lynx, slip furtively through the woodland shadows. Small herds of deer, or perhaps a solitary buck, were also occasionally seen, while sometimes even the lord of the forest, the great antlered bull-moose, stalked majestically across the road.

Every once in a while, as they left mile after mile behind them, the moose would

stop and look wonderingly back at his driver, as though asking in dumb language, "Well, what does this mean, and where are we going?"

But Donald would shout encouragingly, "It's all right, Shovelhorns, old chap. We're carrying the government mails to Nictaw Falls, you and me; go lang." Obedient to this request from his master, the tall steed always shuffled on.

Occasionally when peculiarly tempting browse hung low in their way, Donald stopped and fed him from the branches. It became quite a common sight to see branches along this route stripped of their twigs and bark, and travelers would point them out and say that the horned horse had been feeding there.

They reached Nictaw Falls and the village of St. Clair at noon and Donald hurried about doing his errands. He did not stop for dinner himself, but bought a lunch that

he could eat on the return trip, and before one o'clock they were off.

As soon as his head was turned toward Dundee, the horned horse seemed to understand what was expected of him and he took the home-trail without ever looking back at his driver, as he had done on the way out. He kept up his steady, swinging, long-gaited trot, not stopping to walk unless the grade was very steep, and even then it was only for a few rods. When about ten miles from Dundee he seemed to sense the fact that they were on the home-stretch and, to Donald's astonishment, quickened his pace. The young mail-carrier had expected to see him slacken his speed for the last few miles, but when they arrived in town the sun was still fifteen minutes high.

A little knot of excited watchers were gathered at the store and the post-office as the sun neared the western horizon, eagerly

watching the golden disc as it swiftly approached the green hilltops.

But if they watched the sun feverishly, they were still more interested in the road up the river.

"He never can do it," was the comment upon all lips.

"I no tink I eat oat dis night," exclaimed Louis Lafleur, in his queer patois; but even as he spoke a cloud of dust appeared up the road, and in a few seconds, the tall, gaunt horned horse emerged from the cloud.

There were shouts of delight, hats were thrown into the air, and all crowded around Donald and his wonderful steed. Moosie's nose was rubbed and his sides were slapped until he was tired of it. Even little children crowded up close and stroked his long legs.

"Py gar, I hev one pig pelly-ache this night, I weel," cried Louis, the swaggerer,

as the full extent of his calamity became apparent to him.

The loungers at the tavern were inexorable, and would not let him beg off; so a peck of oats was provided and true to his wager, he ate it every bit, although it took him several nights, and he insisted on having the last four quarts cooked.

The fame of the wonderful horned horse was established and it traveled so far and so fast that about a month later Donald received an invitation from the managers of the great four counties' fair at Lewiston, to come down and exhibit the much-talked-of moose. So, each night for a week before the memorable event, Donald took his tall steed up the river to a long stretch of smooth road and practiced trotting, trying to get him to increase his speed for a short distance and to start quickly.

He put a new coat of paint upon the high-wheeled sulky, blacked the harness

and scoured the buckles. Each day he groomed the smoky gray coat of the moose until he was as sleek as any Morgan.

He drove to Lewiston the day before the fair, that he might get the moose accustomed to the track and to the crowds of people that had already begun to gather. This fair was similar to the country fairs in the States, and it was the one great event in the autumn for that part of New Brunswick.

Born and bred in the roughest and most inaccessible portions of the country, to the wilderness king, who is at once the most wary and the cleverest of all deer, this gala day fair must have seemed a strange babel.

There were the endless streams of vehicles and people afoot, interspersed with herds of cattle and sheep. Many yokes of oxen with ribbons upon their horns were in the procession. The cracking of whips, shouting of excited men and boys, blowing of penny trumpets and whistles, and the

cries of many fakirs were heard. A cloud of dust hung above the country roadway, caused by the passing of many feet, and motes danced in the autumn sunlight.

But there was no horse on the grounds that stood more quietly or looked upon the vast concourse of people with as little concern as did the great moose. He was always the centre of an excited throng. Men and boys and even girls were all the time crowding about him, rubbing his nose and stroking his sides, but he simply gazed upon them with his wide-open, wondering, mild, almond-shaped eyes. He did not stamp or grow restless as many of the horses did, but stood as stoically and as stolid as an Indian chief, tall, majestic and dignified.

When the bell upon the judges' stand sounded for the trotting to begin, Donald drove him upon the track with the rest of the contestants, but two of the horses became almost unmanageable at the sight of

the tall stranger, and reared and plunged. It was at once seen that they could not be trotted in the same heat with the moose, so it was finally arranged that the horses should go first, and that the moose should trot alone when they had finished. The horses were not a fast company. Most of them were compact Morgans or still more chunky Canuck ponies and the best record was two-forty-five.

Excitement was at fever-pitch when the tall steed, in the gaudy red sulky, shuffled on the track. Donald had stipulated that he be allowed to drive around as many laps as he pleased and that his best mile be taken, to which the judges had laughingly assented.

It was not until the moose had gone around the half-mile track twice, and a score of watches, which had been held upon him, registered three-twenty, that the crowd appreciated how fast he was going. His

stride was enormous, but he stepped so much slower than the horses that he seemed not to be going as fast as he really was.

"Wait until he gets warmed up a bit and I wouldn't be surprised if he did a pretty fast mile," commented an old horse jockey, after watching the moose intently.

On his second mile Shovelhorns scaled the time down five seconds and it began to look interesting.

On the third lap the tall horse scaled off six seconds more, making the mile in three minutes and nine seconds.

"That is as good as he can do. We had better call him off," said one of the judges, but the other two said, "Wait."

The excited timers reported three-two for the fourth mile and every one looked to see Donald drive off the track as the lap was completed, but the young Scotchman's blood was up, and he knew his horse better than the crowd did. There was no slacking

when he went under the wire and the moose began his fifth mile at a still better pace than he had yet shown. "Two-fifty-seven," cried the timekeepers as the great horse rushed under the wire for the fifth time.

Men shouted and threw up their hats, women waved their umbrellas, and the din from penny trumpets and whistles was fairly deafening.

"He'll kill him," cried a Dundee farmer excitedly, as the moose clattered by on the first lap of his sixth mile. "No, he won't," replied an old backwoodsman from the North. "You fellers jest wait until that thar moose has trotted about half an hour; then he'll get limbered up an' get his dander up an' there'll be suthin' doin'."

"Two-fifty-three," yelled the jubilant timekeepers as the moose went under the wire again. "Now he will surely stop,"

was the general comment throughout the excited crowd, but he didn't.

Three times more the tall steed with his nose thrust straight out in front of him, and his hoofs clacking like castanets, dashed under the wire, and each time he lowered his record by two seconds. Ten miles had now been trotted in twenty-nine minutes, with a best record of two-forty-seven. Donald was satisfied, although he had not equaled the record made by the horses and he pulled sharply on the reins as they went under the wire for the tenth mile. Instead of stopping, his well-broken steed only thrust his nose further forward, shook out his muscles, increased his stride and started his eleventh mile at a still better clip. His eyes, that had been mild as those of an old cow when he began the race, were now blazing. The long, bristling hair upon his neck and back was erect. The rage of battle had got into his blood. The yelling crowd seemed to awaken

his slow, sleepy nature and he became a mighty racing machine. For the first time he appeared to understand what was wanted of him and he let himself go. Before he had simply been carrying the mail. Faster and faster he went. His stride became gigantic and he stepped much quicker than one would have deemed it possible for so long-geared a creature.

To Donald's excited mind there were visions ahead of the horse record smashed and himself and Shovelhorns the winners of the great Free For All.

He stood up in the sulky and shook the reins over the back of the flying moose. "Go, Shovelhorns, go," he yelled; "we'll beat um yet."

For the first half of this eleventh mile the crowd shrieked itself hoarse; but as the second half drew to a close, it was as still as death. All strained their eyes after the flying moose and fairly held their breath.

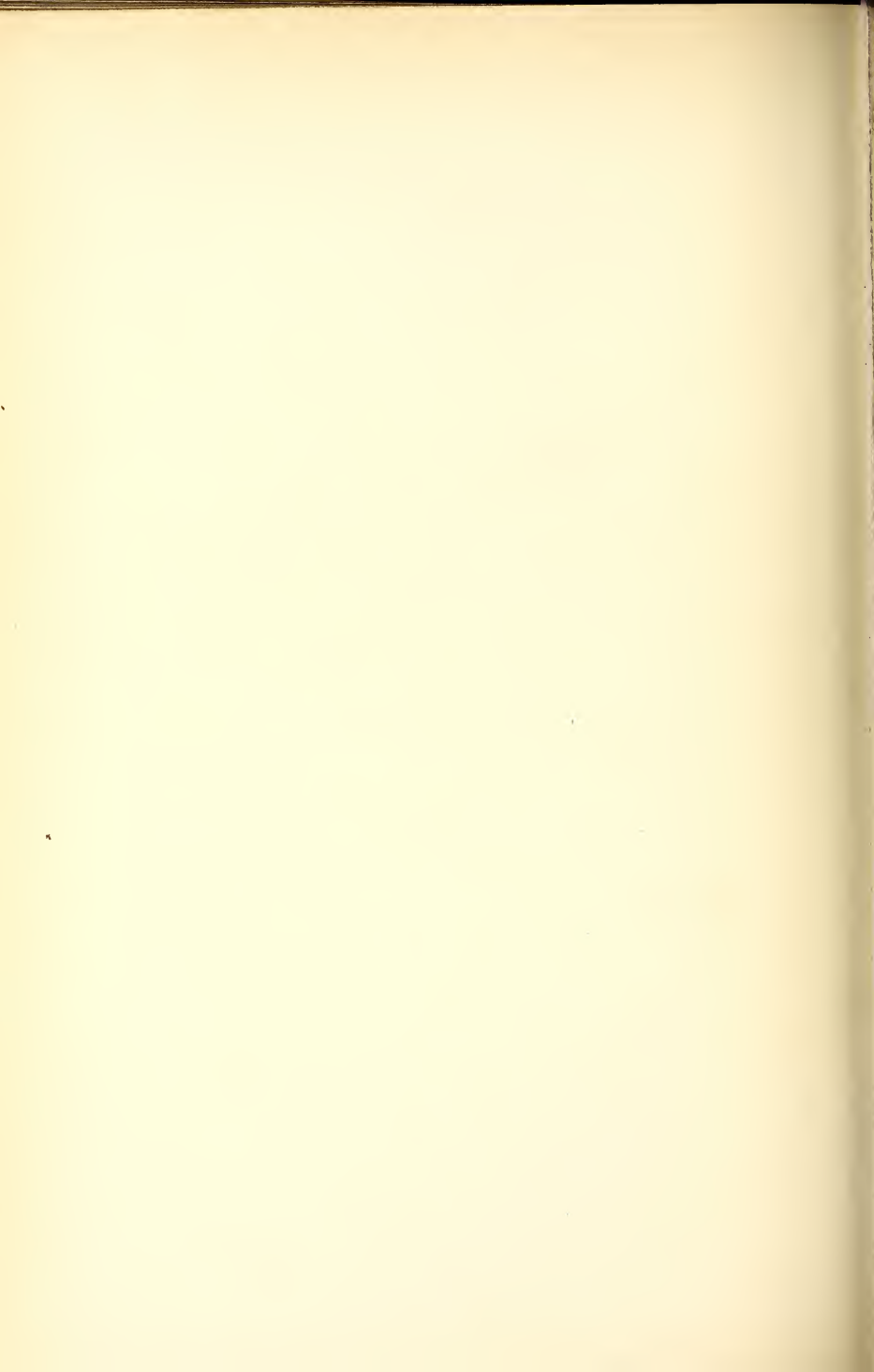
"Two-forty-four," yelled the timekeepers, as the strangest trotter that ever drew sulky dashed under the wire for the last time.

Then what a yell of triumph went up from thousands of throats. The judges rang the bell upon their stand to celebrate the triumph of the horned horse. Trumpets and whistles shrieked and squeaked and pandemonium reigned for five minutes.

By sawing upon the bit and finally running him against the fair-ground fence, Donald brought his excited steed to a standstill, and the famous race was over. But it is still talked of in the region and any one who saw the great mile is an object of interest and has a story to tell to those less fortunate.



CHAPTER VI
THE LEADER OF THE GRAY PACK



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ABOUT two years before that strenuous night when the homely little moose-calf had cowered and trembled beneath his mother, while she stood with her flanks to the cliff and for hours held at bay the hungry gray pack, there had wandered up and down the sparsely settled country of northern New Brunswick a forlorn little figure known as the Old Dog-Woman.

She was a small, slight person with a tangled mop of snow-white hair. Her features were refined and delicate, her hands were those of a lady, but her dress and general attire were those of the poorest beggar. Her figure was bent and rheumatic, but not with years; while the natural beauty of her classical face had been forever

blanched by a blighting sorrow. Any one who once looked in her face never forgot its expression of utter misery. Her eyes were large and in their depths tears were continually forming, yet never fell.

But the chief characteristic of this forlorn little beggar woman, and the one that gave her the name of the Old Dog-Woman, was the fact that she was always surrounded by a sorrowful pack of half-starved mongrel dogs who followed her wherever she went and over whom she exercised a strange, potent influence. At the slightest word or motion from their crazed mistress, they sprang to do her bidding.

Every abused outcast of a dog in the countryside at one time or another had belonged to her band. She fed them out of her own scant meals which she begged from house to house. Her canine retinue was often half famished and when fed would tear their food like wolves.

There were strange stories afloat concerning the Old Dog-Woman, who, notwithstanding her white hair and bent form, was not much over thirty years of age. Only a short time back she had been the wife of a young Scotch minister in a fishing town on the coast.

But a tragedy had come into her life that had left her but a glimmer of reason and she had disappeared from her home. Friends had searched for her but without result. Now, however, she might have visited her own home village in company with her dogs without even causing so much as a suspicion ; time had so changed the once beautiful woman.

The winter of 189- will long be remembered as a season of extreme hardship in New Brunswick. Many deer and moose, after eating everything in reach, starved in their yards, while others were so gaunt and emaciated in the spring, that trustworthy

accounts are given of woodsmen going up to a bull-moose, and laying their hands upon his hollow sides.

Early in December deep snow fell and the cold was intense and unremitting.

One bitterly cold evening, about twilight, the Old Dog-Woman and her half-starved pack wandered into Dundee and, after securing food at several houses, she started up the river-road, closely followed by her mongrels. The kind villagers sought to detain her, saying that it was much too cold and stormy for her to be abroad, but she assured them with a pathetic little sob in her voice that she was going to meet the minister. She had been waiting for him so long, and now he was coming at last. The same evening steps were taken by the authorities to have her detained and placed in the local almshouse for the winter, but before this precautionary measure had been carried out, she had indeed met the minister.

A logging team coming into the village, by the way of the river-road, the same evening, reported a terrific fight going on a mile or two up in the woods. Two of the dogs, one a powerful gray collie and the other a tall, gaunt greyhound, were standing off the entire pack about an old fallen log which they seemed to be guarding. The rest of the dogs, eight in number, would rush in, snapping and snarling; but the two experienced fighters always drove them back after a few minutes of hard battle. The greyhound would jump over and about his assailants, snapping like a wolf, but the collie stood like a rock and fought like a fury.

Early the next morning the constable went in search of the Old Dog-Woman and her pack. For her, he intended to provide shelter in the almshouse, while for the dogs, he had a small rifle tucked away under the seat of the sleigh.

On coming to the spot, which had been indicated to him by the teamster the night before, the constable's eyes and mouth opened wide with astonishment. There, by what the driver had taken for a log, the collie still crouched with bared fangs and raised hackles, but his comrade in the fight, the tall greyhound, was stretched dead at his side.

All around were signs of a desperate fight. Five of the mongrels were as stiff and stark as the greyhound, while the other three cowered near by, licking their wounds.

At the sight of the man, whose face he evidently deemed friendly, the gray collie began whining; then with great care, licking gently with his tongue, he poked away the snow from one end of the log and revealed, to the constable's consternation, the dead face of the Old Dog-Woman.

In a flash the whole truth dawned upon

the officer of the law. The scantily clad little beggar woman had fallen down and frozen in the bitter cold and the mongrel portion of her pack, being famished, had set upon her to devour her; but her two favorite dogs, the greyhound and the collie, had guarded her remains just as faithfully as they would have guarded her body in life. With the heavy odds of four to one and with hunger gnawing at their vitals, they had stood off the mongrels like the dog heroes that they were.

The constable patted the collie's head until he had gained his confidence and then together they brushed away the snow from the beggar woman, who would never again be cold or hungry. The man then gently raised the body and placed it in his long pung sleigh. The collie jumped in beside his dead mistress, licking her face and whining pitifully, as the sad procession started back to town.

The following day just enough men for

pallbearers lowered the pine box, which had been provided, into the grave in the pauper lot in the French Catholic cemetery. The faithful, heart-broken collie scrambled in after the box, which he knew contained his silent, lifeless mistress, as though he too would be covered up with her.

Forcibly they removed him, and the constable, who had taken a great liking to the noble dog, took him home, but he was not content so far from his mistress. He soon escaped and returned to the cemetery. Several times the constable went and coaxed him back to the warm house, where the children were eager to pet him. Finally he escaped again and this time could not be induced to return.

He was frequently seen skulking in the cemetery or in the near-by woods. Often in the eerie midnight hours, when the ghastly moonlight and the somber shadows played tag across the gleaming snow, the

people of the village would hear the long-drawn, pitiful howling of a dog.

Children were half afraid to pass the cemetery at night. The gray collie, who it was thought lived in the woods near by, became a sort of bugbear, like the wolf in Red Riding Hood. And servant girls would frighten the children into hurrying to bed with the assurance that if they didn't go quick, the gray dog would get them. Finally after a few weeks he disappeared from the region, but hunters often reported seeing either him or his track in desolate, far-away places.

The following spring it was alleged that he had turned sheep-killer, and depredations on several valuable flocks were laid to him. One night he would be heard of killing a sheep in a certain vicinity, and the next night he would be reported twenty miles away. The accounts of his cunning and ferocity grew, until at last he was

charged with every depredation in the countryside, becoming a sort of phantom dog that could come and go like the wind. Then it was whispered about that he had been seen in the company of a tall, gray wolf and later on, as the leader of a pack of wolves. But all of these stories were so exaggerated that it was impossible to know just the truth.

When the great, gray collie had seen the rough pine box, containing the cold, unresponsive form of his mistress, lowered into the frozen snow-banked hole where men saw fit to lay her, a deep sense of loneliness and loss came over him. He knew, as well as the men about the grave, that something out of the ordinary had happened to his mistress. The long vigil in the woods, when he had watched through the bitter winter night over her frozen form, had convinced him of this. She had never before refused to respond

to the caress of his warm tongue upon her face, and when he had added to those signs of affection whining and finally pitiful and desolate howling, and got no response, he knew that he would never awaken her.

They had been such boon companions and sorrow had knitted them so firmly together. He had been her favorite of all the dogs. His own life, like hers, had known a tragedy. He had been born a pedigreed pup belonging to a rich lumber merchant in St. Johns. A lumberman had stolen him when he was about six months old, partly for spite against the lumber merchant, and partly because he was the most beautiful dog upon which he had ever set eyes. He had taken him far away into northern New Brunswick, where he had shared the uncertain fortunes of his master. All went fairly well when the man was sober, but the trouble was, he was drunk about half the time. Then he

cursed his brute companion and kicked and beat him until his life was almost unbearable.

Things came to a climax one night in a drinking-place in the town of G——. The dog's master, who was much the worse for drink, swore with a great oath that the dog still loved him, notwithstanding harsh treatment. "I'll b-e-t y-o-u he won't bite me, even if I k-i-l-l him," he said. And ugly Bill, as the man was called, started to carry out the experiment. He seized a chair and forcing the poor brute back into a corner of the room began beating him unmercifully. Three times he struck and then the bewildered dog sprang straight at his throat. Bill warded him off with the chair, but at this point he escaped between his abominable master's legs. With a lightning bound he went through a window into the darkness, and his tormentor never saw him again.

A few days later he fell in with the Old Dog-Woman, and seeing him covered with bruises, and what a fine-blooded dog he was, she at once took him to her heart. With her he had been perfectly happy and contented until she had fallen asleep in the woods.

But now the wheel of fortune had turned again, leaving him once more at the bottom. He lingered about the village, where his mistress had found her last resting-place, for several weeks, going often to the cemetery at dusk when no one could see him. His experience with men had been so unfortunate that he now shunned them as his worst enemies. Twice he had been shot at, the villagers thinking it would be a mercy to put him out of the way, as he seemed so heart-broken and desolate; but neither shot took effect, although each strengthened his suspicions of men.

At last he left civilization far behind and

struck off into the wilderness, going back to the wild life that his ancestors had lived before they became dogs, for a dog is simply a domesticated wolf.

In the wilderness he fared much better than one might imagine. All through that winter he hunted persistently and when spring came was in good flesh. He had a much better nose than most collies and could follow a track even by scent. This enabled him to run down and catch all the rabbits that he could eat, and once he performed the same feat with the swift and cunning fox. Occasionally he dug a partridge from the snow, where it had taken shelter during some cold night. Mice, too, he dug from their snug hiding in old logs. An unfortunate wood-pussy that had come forth to see how the winter went, did not return to his hole.

About the first of March he fell in with a lone she-wolf who had journeyed into

New Brunswick from far to the north, and the two at once joined their fortunes. They hunted together and sought out a den in the rocks which became home to the wilderness dog, and where in June a litter of six wolf-dogs were born.

Here in the wilderness all through the summer the gray collie and the wolf-mother hunted for the six whelps, but when autumn came they had grown so ravenous that their sire decided to take them back to the outskirts of civilization, where they could prey upon the sheep which had not yet been taken in for the winter.

It was just about this time that it was first whispered about in the village that a small wolf-band had appeared in the vicinity, led by a great, gray collie.

A half-dozen flocks of sheep were attacked and much slaughter done. The collie, whose ancestors had been famous sheep-dogs and winners of Derby cups,

somehow seemed to know all about these innocent, white-coated, stupid creatures. He made his attacks with cunning and was always successful. When the sheep had been taken in, they hunted deer and when the deep snows had come, they fell back upon rabbits.

Traps were set for these wolves, and poison was laid, but all in vain. A hunt was organized, but the dogs put upon their tracks were half of them killed by the wolves the first day out, and the rest were so badly scared that they would not follow after that.

It was during the second spring, when the wolf-whelps were about a year old, that the pack had come upon the old moose-cow and her calf, and had given them such a fight for their lives on the fateful night that Moosie remembered so well.

Donald and Shovelhorns often came across the tracks of the wolf-band crossing

the road that they daily traveled on their mail-trips. The moose always snorted and stamped when he saw the tracks, and once, when he stopped and smelled them in a drift, where they were very fresh, the hair upon his neck and back went up and he seemed both frightened and enraged, but Donald thought little of it at the time.

It was not until spring, when the wolves were rather lean after the long, hard winter, that Donald and the moose had a closer acquaintance with the pack.

They were on the return trip, and were still about fifteen miles from Dundee when the moose showed signs of uneasiness. He stopped once or twice and sniffed the air suspiciously. Soon the reason was apparent to Donald, for down the aisles of the leafless forest, wild, wierd and unearthly, freezing the blood in the veins, floated the prolonged howl of a wolf. Then from the other side of the road it was answered. Again and

again these terrifying cries were repeated and Donald knew that the race was on.

The first long howl had been the cry of the chase, given by the old she-wolf, and her whelps had responded with long-drawn, tremulous howls.

To the horned horse this cry had a familiar sound. It brought back to memory every startling scene of that terrible night when the old moose-cow had stood off the pack while he cowered beneath her. It filled him with both rage and fear, and lent wings to his long legs.

Soon the pack broke into the open road behind and came on like the wind. Then it was for the first time that Donald noticed the quick, excited barks of the gray dog who led them as they galloped after him.

"That ain't no wolf," he muttered. "That's a dog. Sounds like a shepherd."

For three miles they raced along, the wolves gaining a little all the time, but

Donald was not much frightened. He did not fear but that he could beat them off until they should reach Dundee. He was so intent watching the pack, that he failed to guide the flying moose as carefully as he should have done.

That afternoon, while they had been on the other end of the route, the wind had toppled over into the road an old birch-stub, and the first intimation that he had of the peril ahead was when the moose cleared the fallen log with a great jump. The wheels of the sulky struck it squarely, the whiffletree broke, the lines were snatched from his hands, and the moose rushed on without him.

The shock of the crash sent him sprawling over the stump, but instantly appreciating the great danger, he sprang upon the log, which was perhaps four feet from the ground, and cried, "Shovelhorns," at the top of his voice. To his great surprise, al-

though he had hoped for just such a miracle, the horned horse wheeled sharply and came charging back, blowing like a steam-engine. As he trotted close to the log, Donald sprang upon him, pulled sharply upon the line to turn him about and they were off just as the pack rushed under the fallen stub in mad pursuit.

The ten rods' lead which they had before was thus lost, and the moose now began a race for his and his master's life, with the pack snapping at his heels and wildly excited by the accident.

"Go it, Shovelhorns, go it," yelled Donald, while with the long birch switch that he had instinctively clutched in his hand, as he was hurled from the sulky, he lashed at the wolves' faces, trying to keep them back.

For three or four miles they raced along neck to neck, as it were, but with each mile the pack grew more confident. They drew in closer and closer, snapping at the legs

of the flying moose whenever opportunity offered.

It was a frightful position in which the young mail-carrier found himself. He knew full well that the moose, when urged to his utmost speed, overreaches and is apt to stumble. If he stumbled but once, or stepped on the flapping tugs going at this terrific pace, with the pack all about them, Donald's own bones would be white and fleshless before his friends again saw him. If by a lucky snap one of the pack should hamstring the moose, his fate would be just as bad. Even if they merely drew blood, the smell of the precious fluid would so excite them that they would rush in at any cost. It was certainly a life and death race, where the slightest accident meant death, and where the least incident might turn the scales in either direction.

At last, by a lucky snap, one of the wolves tasted blood and the leader renewed

his yelping, while the pack drew in closer, their jaws clicking like steel-traps.

But at this point Shovelhorns got a little unexpected help, for on the backward stroke of his hind-leg, he let his heel go and caught the collie under the jaw, causing him to turn a complete somersault in the air, and fall kicking upon his back.

The pack, now wrought up to a frenzy, closed in upon him to finish him, but quick as a flash he was up and on guard, glaring at them like a demon; so they thought better of eating their leader and again came on.

This little incident, however, had given the moose several rods the start and they had covered more than two miles before they were again alongside.

By this time they were within three miles of Dundee and Donald saw escape ahead. He swung his whip and yelled like a madman, seeking by mere noise to in-

timidate the pack, while Shovelhorns increased his pace. A sense that they were approaching dangerous country seemed to come to the wolves. By degrees they slackened their pace and let the moose draw ahead of them. Then they heard the barking of a dog in the distance and that settled it. Like gray shadows they melted into the silent gloom of the woods.

Five minutes later Donald and Shovelhorns rushed into the village. The absence of the sulky, and the mail-carrier astride the tall, ungainly moose and their swift pace, created consternation even before Donald had told the story.



CHAPTER VII
IN THE WHITE SILENCE



CHAPTER VII

IN THE WHITE SILENCE

AFTER the harrowing experience related in the last chapter, Donald always carried a pocket-rifle under the seat of the sulky.

The next time that the wolf-pack undertook to run them down, he got two of them, but the pack took care that he did not get their pelts. The following week he got still a third, which was skulking after him through the bushes, and this loss of three of their number made the pack most wary. The gray collie probably counseled them against man and his deadly thunder-stick, for Donald saw nothing more of them during his remaining year and a half as mail-carrier.

With each month that went by, Donald and Shovelhorns became better friends.

The great homely brute would always wig-wag his ears whenever his young master came near him. When he was off duty and roaming in the fields, Donald could call him as far away as he could hear his master's shrill whistle.

It was no use trying to keep the moose within a pasture or in an enclosed field when he was not at work, for he could stride over a five-foot fence without even breaking his trot. It was a ludicrous sight to see him come striding over the fences when Donald called him. If the fence was exceptionally high, he would give a little hump at the shoulder as he went over, and that was all.

Donald usually put a bell upon the moose when he was not on duty, so that its pleasant jangle might tell him where his horned horse was.

One hot summer night he turned Shovelhorns loose after the long day's journey.

To his surprise the following morning he was not in waiting at the barn as usual, in readiness for the long trip, and so Donald went after him.

He found him in a shallow pond, half a mile from the house, lying in the water with only his muzzle showing. Above him hovered a black swarm of deer-flies, gnats and mosquitoes. Both of the moose's eyes were badly swollen and entirely closed, and Donald found, after coaxing him from the water, that for the time being he was entirely blind. He got him home, and bathed his eyes in hot water, but he was unable to make the accustomed journey, and Donald had to resort to the poor substitute of a horse.

Many of the local horses of repute were matched against Shovelhorns, and none came off victorious. There was occasionally a horse that could beat him in a short spurt of half a mile, but Donald usually in-

sisted upon a long race of five or ten miles, and in such tests of endurance the horned horse always came in far ahead. The moose's best point was his staying quality. He always did the last mile faster than he did the first, and, as an old trapper remarked on seeing him come in from a ten-mile run, "That thar moose has got wind like a steam-engine."

Thus spring, summer, autumn and winter came and went, and Shovelhorns and Donald grew to be the fastest friends.

When the warm spring zephyr breathed softly through the twigs of budding aspen and maple, they were glad, because all the world was glad. Life was again springing and singing in every twig and stem, and so their blood leapt with all the other glad pulses of nature.

When the thick, green luxuriance of summer was over all the land, and the lap of nature was full to overflowing, they were

glad because earth and air were so full and sweet.

When autumn rattled down her store of fruit and nuts, the stride of the tall moose always became more pronounced and he seemed to feel the tonic of fresh winds and keen-biting frost.

When hoary winter spread its mantle over field and forest, congealing the blood in the veins of nature, it did not retard Shovelhorns, for he was a steed of iron. He was as strong as a young oak, and his breath, like a cloud of steam, was mightier than the chilling breath of the north wind, for he always melted it, although the hair under his throat was often covered with icicles.

Shovelhorns and Donald might still have been carrying the mail to this day, for all that I know, had not something happened that changed the tenor of both their lives in a remarkable manner.

It occurred in September when they had been covering the route a little over two years, and it was all over so quickly that the young mail-carrier never quite knew how it did happen.

Although early autumn, an exceptionally hard frost had hung its crimson streamers on moose-maple and sumac, and with the returning cold, Shovelhorns seemed even more full of life than usual.

On the particular afternoon in question, they were jogging along at their accustomed slashing trot, and Donald was dreaming a pleasant day-dream in which the blue hills and the sweet-smelling woods had their place, when faint and far off there floated to them on a puff of the wind a prolonged quavering bellow. Instantly Shovelhorns stopped, and his great trumpet-like ears were thrust straight out in the direction from which the sound had come. His nostrils were extended and he blew through

them with a whistling sound, just as he always did when excited or alarmed. Presently, the far-away call was repeated, and to Donald's great surprise, his horned horse answered with a mighty bellow that reverberated through the hills, echoing again and again. In quick response came the call which they had first heard. Shovelhorns raised his head high in air and again flung back the full-chested bellow of the bull-moose in rutting-time.

Then without the slightest warning, and before Donald so much as guessed what was in the wind, he wheeled sharply and went crashing through the bushes, taking the shortest cut to the far-away stranger, whose calling was such sweet music to his ears. The alder-bushes bent under the charge of the flying moose. The sulky bumped over hummocks and rocks, and the terrified mail-carrier clung to the bounding, pounding vehicle for dear life.

"Whoa, whoa," he yelled, tugging at the reins desperately, but the usually docile moose probably did not even hear him. He was answering the call of his kind. Small saplings bent beneath their rush and then flew up with a whistling sound, whipping Donald in the face until the blood ran. He bounced from side to side upon the sulky, and at last was obliged to drop the reins and hold on with both hands.

He was watching his chance to jump, it being only a question of a few seconds until they should strike something that would not yield, when the sulky would be smashed to kindling-wood; but before he could pick out a clear spot in which to land, Shovelhorns ran between two small trees that stood too near together for the sulky to pass, and there was a great crash. Donald felt a queer, faint sensation and then all was dark.

The next thing he remembered he was

lying about ten feet from the sulky. His coat was torn nearly off him. His face was bleeding from a dozen scratches, blood was flowing freely from a deep cut in his scalp, and he was stiff and sore. He sat up and looked about him, dazed and uncertain. There was the sulky wedged in between the trees, with both wheels smashed, the axle broken, and the whiffletree gone, but the shafts were empty. For a moment he rubbed his head and tried to think, then in a flash it all came back to him. Shovelhorns, faithful, homely old Shovelhorns. He had answered the call of a cow-moose and had gone back to the wild.

But Shovelhorns was not so much to blame, after all. He had simply obeyed an instinct as old as his kind. For had it not been decreed in the unwritten law of moose-land that when the moose-maple hung out its scarlet and crimson streamers, that the blood in the veins of the bull-moose should

run hot, and that, wherever he might be, he should answer the call of the cow?

So at the very moment that Donald picked himself up and viewed the sorrowful plight of his sulky, faithless Shovelhorns was standing under a tamarack tree, half a mile away in a deep swamp, rubbing noses with a three-year-old moose heifer. She, in turn, was lapping the salt from the breast-strap of his harness and wondering what this strange affair was that her suitor wore, for in all her experience she had never seen a moose like this.

The faithlessness of Shovelhorns completely disheartened Donald as far as the mail-route was concerned. I am afraid that the driving of his horned horse was the best part of the business as he viewed it. Certain it was, that after making the trip a few times with horses, he gave up in disgust, selling the route for the remainder of the time that he had contracted to carry

the mails. Then to solace himself, as he explained, he took to the woods and his traps.

Old Sandy said that his son was "putting in his time hunting for Shovelhorns," and perhaps that was nearer the truth than any one guessed, although Donald would not admit that this was what he tramped the wilderness for, day after day.

But if Donald really expected to allure his truant moose back to civilization, he was grievously disappointed, for he did not get even a glimpse of him that autumn and winter. Perhaps Shovelhorns mistrusted that his master was in search of him and so kept just out of his reach.

The moose is the most wary and most difficult of approach of any big game. When the moose lies down at night, he always circles back on his track, making a loop, and finally lies down with his head to the fresh track which he has made but a

few minutes before, so close to the trail that he at once detects the fact if any one is following him.

Should his good nose tell him during the night that he is pursued, he waits until his enemy passes, and while the latter is following the loop back to the moose's place of concealment, he noiselessly moves away, and thus gets a good start. Giant that he is, the moose can pass through a tangled thicket, which is almost impenetrable, more noiselessly than man.

Ex-President Roosevelt tells in "The Wilderness Hunter" how he hunted three weeks in the moose country, every day seeing fresh moose signs. Many a time he and his companions made the loop only to find that the moose had been warned of their approach by his good nose, and had left. On other occasions they saw where the moose had passed through thick cover within a few rods of them without making

the slightest sound. Gray, silent, and protectively colored, he steals through the forest like a veritable ghost when he wishes ; or if it pleases his whim, he thunders through the underbrush like a cyclone.

The second autumn after the escape of Shovelhorns, Donald set his traps early, as the frosts came sooner than usual and there was every indication of a long, hard winter. The muskrat had builded his house nearly twice its usual size. Husks were thick on the corn ; the goose-bones were well filled with fat. By the first of October the streams and rivers were already rimmed with black anchor ice.

About the middle of the month the first snow fell ; although it did not stay, it was a thing of beauty while it lasted. It heaped each tiny twig with a ridge of pearl, and fringed all the dead fronds with feathery lacework. It capped the blue-green plumes of the firs with ermine, and covered

up all the scarred and naked places on the bosom of mother earth. About the middle of November occurred a great fall of about two feet of snow, and the white silence enfolded the land until spring came, when the streams and rivers again ran riot with glad waters.

To young Donald, warmly clothed and full of life, the snow-clad forests and streams were a fairy-land of wonder and beauty, and when was added to that the zest of the hunter and trapper, his world was full to overflowing.

There was one cloud in his sky, however. The gray dog and his pack of wolves preyed continually on his traps, and constant warfare was waged between them. He laid poison, and cunningly placed a dozen large wolf-traps, procured for the purpose, but all in vain. The wolf-band was led by a cunning that fairly matched his own. Yet if he could not poison them, he could always

be in waiting, and whenever he saw a stealthy gray shadow skulking in the deep glooms of the woods, he promptly sent a bullet after it.

When the snows became deep, the moose went into their winter-quarters, selecting their yards with great care.

Early this winter fabulous stories were brought in by half-breeds and other hunters of a gigantic moose, the king of all his kind, who inhabited the region about Lake Lonely, at the extreme northern end of Donald's line of traps. Some old hunters, who really knew better, swore that he stood eight feet at the withers, and that his antlers measured seven feet.

Donald's imagination was at once fired by their wild stories. He had always wanted a set of antlers and here was his chance to secure some record-breakers. Accordingly, he gave less attention to his traps and more to the big moose, after first having changed

his small calibre rifle for a forty-five-seventy Winchester.

About this time there came a series of warm rains, followed by sharp freezes, which made ideal conditions for hunting the moose.

The crusts that formed with each succeeding snow were not strong enough to hold the king of the wilderness, while they would hold a man nicely. If it thawed, he had merely to resort to snow-shoes.

The great bull, whose horns Donald had set his heart on, was so strong, so long-legged, and so sure of his own prowess and strength that he had not yarded with the rest of the herd which frequented the region. This, too, was in Donald's favor, so it seemed almost as though he had the bull at his mercy.

Early one Monday morning, about the first of January, he struck the fresh track of the antlered monarch, and set off in pursuit at a brisk pace. For the first hour or two,

he saw signs that the bull was traveling leisurely, for he occasionally stopped to browse, but when the track had circled back twice to a point where the moose might see if any one was following him, Donald became convinced that the crafty old fellow had seen him, and knew what was afoot. After that there was no more browsing, but a straightaway trail, marked by gigantic strides. This at first discouraged the young hunter, but late in the afternoon he came upon a place where the moose had lain down, and his hopes arose. He was surely getting tired. As the moon that night made it almost as light as day, he followed the trail till about ten o'clock and then crawled into a deep spruce thicket, where the ground was almost free from snow.

Here in a sheltered nook he made a sort of seat of hemlock boughs, and, half sitting and half lying, he dozed away by his camp-fire the remaining hours of the night. He was

up long before the sun, and after eating a light lunch, which he carried with him, was off again, determined that before he slept, the great antlers should be his.

It was not until high noon, however, that he first caught sight of the wary bull, and even then he was a long way off. He was climbing a steep hill laboriously. The crust broke with him at every step, for the sun had become quite warm, and he was clearly greatly fatigued.

When he had mounted to the top of the hill, he stood for a moment and looked back, his mighty form clearly outlined against the intense blue sky. As the other hunters had said, he was a king among moose.

At the sight of him Donald's blood ran riot. What a prize he was!

Could he hit him at this great distance? for he was about five hundred yards away. Prudence said, Wait, you will get a better

shot soon ; but the impulse of youth prevailed. The rifle went up, a puff of smoke leaped from the barrel, and the singing ball went hurtling across the valley at the king.

The shot was too low, but it ploughed a furrow of hair from the bull's side, and drew blood. For a second the monarch stood clearly silhouetted against the sky. Then as the crack of the rifle again rolled across the valley to him, and the bullet bit his belly, he wheeled with a snort and charged off through the trees.

When Donald came up to the spot where the bull had stood and saw the snow crimson with blood, he was doubly excited. He must overtake and kill this giant and have the massive horns, if he followed until he dropped. So he redoubled his efforts and whenever he came within range of the prize, imprudently blazed away at him. In the middle of the afternoon he sent a bullet through one of the large homely ears of the

bull, and just before dark ploughed a slight flesh wound in his nose, and another in his flank.

When darkness set in, the bull was barely a hundred yards in the lead, and so fagged that he could hardly move. Donald himself was also about winded, and he, too, could scarcely move one leg after the other. It seemed as though his snow-shoes weighed at least fifty pounds.

When dusk had fairly come, for it was cloudy, he sank down exhausted beneath a little spruce, where the ground was quite free from snow. He would stop here for a time and rest and get back his wind, and when the moon arose he would press on and finish his moose.

Meanwhile the great homely brute, whom he had hunted with such relentless zeal, had also collapsed, for he stood not one hundred and fifty yards away, leaning against a friendly tree to steady himself.

His knees shook, and his flanks were covered with sweat and foam. Blood dripped from his soft, fleshy nose, and his breath came in mighty sobs. So spent he was, that a man might have killed him with an axe, and he would probably not have stirred a hoof.

For more than an hour he stood there gasping and panting, but by degrees his mighty muscles became steady and his breathing free and deep. The sweat dried on his flanks, and the blood ceased to drip from his wounds, which were not serious for so powerful a beast.

With the return of strength and wind, a flame of red hate came into the mild almond-shaped eyes of the bull, and battle raged in his veins. Was he not king of the land? Had he not worsted every bull that ranged within a day's journey of his lake? Did he not rule this land like a czar? Who was this bloodthirsty man who

had come into his domain and followed him like a wolf? What was in his thunder-stick that made it bite like a snake?

I dare say the monarch did not reason this way, but with his returning strength, rage boiled up in him. He would run no more but would go back upon his trail and kill this man creature who was trying to kill him. Stealthily, like a great shadow, he turned and silently stole back through the gloom. Fortune now seemed to favor him, for the moon appeared as he took the back track and he could see as plainly as in broad daylight.

Presently, he stopped and lifted his head high, sniffing the air critically. There under a little spruce, not thirty paces away, was the hated man creature who had hunted him, but the wind was dead against him, and he could not get the scent. For a full minute he stood uncertain and then slowly advanced. At last he stood almost directly

over the sleeper. Again he sniffed the air and again waited.

His soft, upper lip reached down to the man's rifle, which was leaning against the tree-trunk, and then the moose got a strong whiff of gunpowder. At the hated scent, which he associated with his burning wounds, the hair upon his neck stood up like the quills upon a porcupine, and his eyes blazed red as the embers in a camp-fire. Slowly he raised his sledge-hammer hoof; one blow would crush the man's skull like an egg-shell.

When Donald had fallen asleep under the spruce, at first his sleep had been deep and dreamless, but presently it became disturbed. From one dire peril he hastened to another in dreamland, until at last he thought that he stood at the foot of a high cliff, upon the summit of which toppled a large boulder. For a moment it clung like a living thing to the cliff and then it fell.

At this point in his dream he opened his eyes, but was so paralyzed with fear that he was powerless to stir or move. What he beheld was quite like his dream. For dark and beetling like the cliff a mighty moose stood over him. Hate and fury blazed in his eyes, and his death-dealing hoof was raised to crush his head.

Psychologists tell us that under terrible stress the human mind takes no note of time and a day is as a second and a week like a moment. It seemed to Donald, as he lay there, that the better part of his life passed with chain-lightning rapidity before him. Each event was as vivid and real as it had been the day that it happened. Days, months, and years seemed crowded into two or three seconds. He wondered vaguely if it would hurt when the moose crushed his head, and what it was like to die. Who would find him, and would his friends be ahead of the wolf-pack? Would

it break his mother's heart, and what would his father say?

Then some power, over which he had no volition at the time, asserted itself, and not knowing why he did so, or what he did, or what the result of the act would be, his parched lips parted and a wild appealing cry rang like a trumpet-call through the aisles of the listening pines and spruces.

Like a mighty electric shock the cry seemed to strike upon the towering form and the tense senses of the gigantic moose. For a moment his hoof was stayed in air, and then it slowly descended, not upon the man's head, at which it had been aimed, but upon the soft spruce needles. The great homely head was lowered and the long, fleshy, upper lip was thrust toward the man creature.

Donald raised his hand and laid it upon the soft muzzle, where his bullet that afternoon had ploughed a deep flesh wound.

The nose was still moist with blood. Then a long, rough tongue was thrust out and the moose licked the salt from his sweaty hand. For a full minute he stood thus, while the spectral fir-trees watched and were amazed.

Then, with a little snort of alarm, the moose wheeled and trotted off into the darkness.

When the last crunch of his hoofs had died away in the distance and only the sound of the wind fell upon the straining ears of the man, a great tremor shook the strong frame as though the hunter had been in the grip of a deadly ague. Like a little child he leaned against the tree and sobbed, until the quiet of the ancient woods about him, and his own strong nerves asserted their usual stern sway over his emotions.

Then he painfully got to his feet, and shouldering his rifle, wearily plodded off

into the darkness, taking an opposite direction from that in which the moose had gone.

But what of the wild cry that he had uttered, as he lay helpless upon the ground, gazing up into the face of grim, inexorable death?

It was merely three syllables, though quivering with terror and anguish. As the wind flung the cry far through the ghostly aisles of the woods and the echo repeated it along the opposite hill, it came back with mocking distinctness, "Shovelhorns!"



CHAPTER VIII
A BATTLE OF HOOFS AND FANGS



CHAPTER VIII

A BATTLE OF HOOFS AND FANGS

THE tall gray collie, leader of the wolf-pack, and the Wilderness King, as we shall now call Shovelhorns, often met, for the pack hunted upon the king's range, to his great annoyance and disgust, and sometimes even to his peril. Giant that he was, like Achilles he had his vulnerable points, which his enemies were keen in spying out.

There was no sound in the wilderness that so exasperated the mighty moose as the prolonged, tremulous hunting cry of the pack, for then he knew that there was trouble afoot for some one of the forest-dwellers, and with most of them he was upon rather good terms.

Deer and caribou, however, were the

worst sufferers from their deprivations when the hunting was good ; but in the lean years they usually fell back upon the poor rabbit, who is meat for nearly all the carnivorous creatures from pole to pole.

It was a favorite amusement of the tall collie to torment the great moose. It was like playing with gun-powder, but the dog seemed not to care for that. He was enough of a wolf himself to feel the keen exhilaration of the chase and combat, so he took his chances with the wilderness monarch's keen-cutting hoofs, just as he did with Donald's traps and poison.

He would come up to within two or three rods of the moose and sit upon his tail watching him, with his long, red tongue lolling out and his fangs showing. He would always keep shifting his position to get behind the bull, who on his part would keep turning so as to face his tormentor. After a few minutes of this sparring, the

long, bristling hair upon the bull's neck would stand on end, and his eyes would blaze. At this point in the proceedings he usually charged.

The dog would sit quietly upon his haunches until the irate King got within ten or fifteen feet of him, when he would stealthily slip to one side, and retaliate by snapping at the bull's heels as he passed. When he wheeled about with an angry snort to face him again, there he would be sitting upon his tail with his tongue lolling out as before, plainly saying by his manner, "Come on, you great clumsy."

If the bull was in a peaceful frame of mind and not inclined to notice him, the dog would set up a sharp barking. This never failed to drive the moose into a frenzy and he would then charge madly at his tormentor again and again, blowing like a steam-engine and coming down with his terrible hoofs like a pile-driver whenever

he got within striking distance of the dog. Somehow, however, he never quite reached him.

The winter after Donald had escaped so miraculously from the vengeance of Shovelhorns, the wolf-pack undertook to hunt him down and kill him. Deer and caribou had become scarce in the region, due to the continual hunting of the pack. Foxes, wildcats, lynx, owls, weasels and mink all preyed upon the poor rabbit, so that with the wolf-pack to feed as well, the fan-shaped tracks became less numerous. Thus it was partly from necessity that the pack took to hunting the moose. Probably, too, the old animosity between him and the collie helped matters.

At first, when the snows were not deep, this hunting took the form of continually dogging his footsteps, so that wherever the bull went, there were three or four of these silent, gray shapes stealing after him. When

he stopped, they would stop also and sit about him upon their tails, thirty or forty feet away, silent and watchful.

At first the King charged them just as he had the dog, but he soon saw that this was useless, especially as it gave some of them a chance to snap at his heels while he was chasing others. So he kept on guard as much as he could, always taking care to have some heavy cover at his back and charging only when they came too near or were too bold in their threatening.

He did not much fear them. He was so strong and so sure of his strength. He had worsted so many bulls, and driven so many deer and caribou pell-mell from his range, that he imagined nothing could withstand him, once it came to short range and a real fight.

But it annoyed him exceedingly to have these silent gray shapes always at his heels. It was not so very bad the first day, but the

second it made him nervous, and the third it actually wore on him. With the wolves it was different, for some could worry the moose while others hunted. There were always enough of them ready and willing for the sport to keep the game going. It was the cunning stratagem of the collie to wear the King out by continual worrying, and when he was at last exhausted to close in and finish him.

But the bull had no mind to be caught like a rat in a trap, as he eventually would be in the deep snow, if he did not do something to make himself more secure. So he stamped out a very small yard of about half an acre, which was well stocked with browse of the kind he liked and a part of which was heavily timbered. There was a phalanx of large trees that would guard his flank well when the death struggle came. I am not sure that the great moose planned this as the spot where he

would make his last stand, but certainly a better one could not have been chosen.

The wolf-pack, on their part, made the mistake of thinking they could conquer him in a fair fight. If they had held to their worrying tactics and not allowed the bull to sleep by night or day, they might have worn him out and simply tired him to death, just as water wears away stone. But when they saw how their worrying was telling upon their prey, they became overconfident, and one cold, frosty night, when the moose's breath was like a great cloud of steam, when the crust cracked like the report of a rifle, and the wind moaned fitfully in the tree-tops, the gray pack pitted its strength against that of the bull-moose in a desperate battle of hoofs and fangs.

Perhaps hunger had something to do with urging the wolf-pack on, for this ceaseless worrying of the moose had not

given them the chance that they ordinarily had to hunt; but a wolf can go for a long time without eating, and when at last he does feast, he will eat enough to make up for all his fasting.

So it happened that on that cold winter night when only the pale moon and the glittering stars looked down to see, the King backed up against the phalanx of trees, which so well guarded his flanks, and the gray pack drew in close, to within fifteen or twenty feet and sat about upon their tails, watching the bull intently.

They had never dared to come in so close before and the King knew that the hour for which he had been waiting was at hand. He knew that these eight gaunt timber wolves with their yellow phosphorescent eyes, and their gleaming fangs, were a terrible fighting machine. There is no fang in the wilderness that sinks as deep as that of a wolf, and no other creature is quite

so strong, so courageous, and so terrible. The bull knew all this. It was his nature to know it. His kind had battled with wolves for untold ages, and this knowledge was a part of his heredity. It was instinct for him to know wolves.

But in the moose's veins also was the fierce fighting blood of many a belligerent bull who had battled successfully with wolves. He was so filled with the rage of conflict that this fury gave him twice his normal strength.

Perhaps, too, he remembered the night when he had cowered beneath his mother while she fought, as only a wilderness mother can, for her offspring. They might at last drag him down and leave his huge frame fleshless in the snow, but the scene of such a conflict would be strewn with the bodies of dead wolves.

Of course the King had no well-connected thought, but this was what his boil-

ing blood and his blazing eyes said as plainly as words could have expressed it. And this was what his strong breath said, as it whistled through his widely extended nostrils.

For an hour they sat thus in a sort of death-watch, the eight silent gray shapes upon their tails, and the mighty King, also watchful, but more impatient than the pack.

At last the gray collie raised his muzzle and gave three short yelping barks that rang out on the clear air as sharp as the crack of a pistol. Of one accord the eight crouching forms sprang at the King who received them with lowered antlers, ripping to right and left with the twenty-six points of his seventy-pound broadsword. Two of the eight wolves limped back to their old position, while a third was caught under the belly and mortally wounded. As he fell gasping to the ground, the King reared



THE KING RECEIVED THEM WITH LOWERED ANTLERS



in air and came down upon him with both hoofs, breaking his back and killing him instantly.

But at the moment that he had been breaking the wolf's back, the gray dog had caught him by one fore-leg and a gigantic wolf by the other. Again, with a mighty effort the bull reared, and the wolf, whose policy is always to snap and then jump back and snap again, let go his hold, but the gritty collie held on. When the moose's hoof descended upon him, he would have fared as ill as the wolf a moment before, but the blow was glancing and his heavy coat, which was so thick that water never penetrated to his skin, stood him in good stead. So the keen-cutting hoof slipped off his side, and although it left him gasping for breath and stunned, he was not otherwise hurt. The King would have finished him then and there had not three of the pack, springing in at once, claimed

his entire attention. He struck out at them mightily with his hoofs, catching one fairly on the top of his head and crushing his skull. Under cover of this attack, the leader scrambled back to safety.

The pack now drew off for a few seconds to lick their wounds and get their breath. Ordinarily, they would have turned to eating those who had been wounded, but tonight the fire of battle was in their veins, and the dead wolves had no attraction for them in this stage of the game.

The King was bleeding freely from both fore-legs where the wolf and the gray dog had slashed him, but none of his great strength was gone. He was still blazing with rage.

For a few moments the six remaining besiegers sat silent upon their tails, but at last they resorted to a stratagem, for the dog went around behind the moose, and thrusting his head between two of the trees,

where there was not room for his body to pass, set up a frightful barking.

The bull, thinking that his stronghold had been broken into from the rear, although it had merely been a feint, turned quickly and like a flash the five waiting wolves sprang in upon him.

Seeing his mistake, he wheeled, but not until one of the wolves had slashed him deeply in the flank, barely missing hamstringing him, and another had torn a deep wound in his shoulder.

The taste of blood from these two wounds and its strong scent that filled the air seemed to drive the pack mad with fighting frenzy and blood lust, so they no longer considered themselves, but sprang in frantically and heedlessly at the moose. Although he kept his antlers lowered and ripped with them from side to side and dealt sledge-hammer blows with his hoofs, they slashed him again and again. For at

least a quarter of an hour there was continual fighting of the most desperate kind. The mighty jaws of the wolves clicked like steel-traps, and the thunderous thud of the King's hoofs was not wholly deadened even by the deep snow. His breath came whistling through his nostrils in sobs and gasps. Blood and foam dripped from his muzzle and the scene of the struggle was trampled and crimson with the red blood of battle ; but above all the din of conflict sharp and clear rang the excited barking of the collie as he cheered on the pack.

How the moose longed to plant his hoof upon the dog's neck and break it, for he felt instinctively that he was the main-spring of this terrific fighting machine.

His own plight was getting desperate. Each breath was like a sob, and the steady drip, drip, drip of his wounds was telling even upon him. It was only by exerting every ounce of his great strength, and fenc-

ing and striking with a whirlwind of defense, that he could keep them from dragging him down. Two of their number were already dead, and two more desperately wounded, but they still fought on. It was merely a question of whether the moose's strength would hold out longer than their numbers.

They gave him no rest. If he could stop only for a moment to draw a deep breath! But the pack clearly saw their advantage, and sprang in continually, so if he valued his life, his hoofs must ever be striking.

At last they wore him down and for a second he faltered in the fight, and leaned against a tree as he had done the night that Donald pursued him until he was ready to drop. The three remaining sound wolves and the collie rushed in to finish him, but in that second's respite he had got his second wind. Perhaps, too, in that second

he had seen a vision of his gigantic skeleton lying with whitening bones in the silent forest.

All his remaining strength, and all the cunning of his kind, he now brought to his aid. Right and left he slashed with his antlers and his hoofs descended like lightning. In a lucky moment he planted a blow squarely upon the back of the old she-wolf, breaking it as he had done with his first victim.

So rapid and strong had been the moose's antler-thrusts that both of the remaining wolves, and also their intrepid leader, had been slightly wounded. They therefore drew back a few feet and sat down on their tails as before.

Although nearly spent with loss of blood and desperate fighting, the King's rage was terrible, and seeing the kicking she-wolf so near at hand, he lowered his antlers and slashed her again and again, until with

horns and hoofs he had ground her into a shapeless mass.

When at last she lay lifeless, as dead as a rotten log, a sense of what had happened to his mate with whom he had bred and hunted for the past four years seemed to come to the collie, for he lifted up his muzzle and rent the stillness with a prolonged pitiful howl, in which the wolf-whelps joined.

She had been dam to the pack and mate to its leader and with a full realization of their loss, the heart went out of them.

Without even another look at the King, the gray dog turned and limped painfully away through the silent, mysterious snow-bound forest, leaving the moose conqueror and in full possession of the field.

Never again did the wolf-band take the defensive and attack the bull openly, although the gray dog continued to sit upon his tail and bark at the moose, and thus tor-

ment him whenever opportunity offered. The King lived to see even him and his band disappear from his range, where they had hunted deer and caribou so long.

Only once more did these two factions meet in combat, and then the moose took the offensive.

It happened about a year after the encounter just related. Donald had set a portion of his traps as usual about Lake Lonely and along the little streams that flowed into it, as well as along Indian River. He had built him a shack this autumn about a mile from the lake back in among the foothills, that he might spend a night there occasionally on this end of his round.

One evening early in December he had finished looking at the traps, and had just struck off through some very rough country, taking a short cut to the shack, when he met with a slight accident, which in it-

self was not serious, but being alone in the wilderness it meant much to him.

There was about two feet of very soft snow upon the ground and he was going upon snow-shoes. As he was slipping and sliding down a steep bank, one of the shoes caught. He was not quick enough to free either his foot or the snow-shoe from the snag that held it, until he brought up with a sharp jerk which broke the toe-strap on the shoe, and at the same time nearly broke his ankle. So badly was it sprained and so quickly did it begin to swell that he was soon obliged to gash his shoe and stocking in the instep to relieve the pain.

For half an hour he sat there upon the bank, holding snow upon his ankle and groaning. Aside from the intense pain, it was a sorry plight in which he found himself. It was not very cold so he would not freeze, but he was a mile from the shack, and twenty-five miles from a set-

tlement, or any human creature so far as he knew.

To walk to the shack was out of the question, and he could not crawl on all fours in the deep snow. Clearly he must stay where he was for the night.

So he crouched under a little spruce, and scraping away the snow as well as he could, tried to reconcile himself to the hardest night that his young life had ever known. Darkness was settling down fast and a sense of terrible loneliness and foreboding clutched him.

The exertion of crawling to the little spruce made his ankle ache almost unbearably, so he again held snow upon it and set his teeth to stand the pain as best he could.

At this point in the young trapper's misery, a wild, weird howl floated down through the snow-clad woods to his ears. The sound was so far away and uncertain as

to be almost inaudible, but it made Donald drop the snow that he was holding to his throbbing foot and sit up rigid and intense, waiting for the cry to come again. He did not have long to wait, for soon it was repeated and this time much nearer.

It was a cry to make any lone man in the wilderness start, even when he was in full possession of all powers and well armed, but in Donald's case, lying in the snow with a sprained ankle, it was like a death knell. The cry that he had heard was the hunting-cry of the pack.

There is something about man as he stands erect upon two feet, instead of four, that overawes a wild beast. All animal trainers know this and are careful not to slip and fall in the cages of wild animals. When man sprawls down upon all fours, he loses his dignity and majesty, and that which makes the wild beast fear him as something strange and mysterious. So the animal

trainer keeps his feet as he would his life.

Donald knew this fact full well. He knew that his lying maimed in the snow was as good as an invitation to the wolf-pack to come and pick his bones. But what could he do?

There was the small rifle that he always carried when trapping, for he had discarded the forty-five-seventy as soon as he ceased hunting the bull. He reached in his coat-pocket for the box of cartridges that he always carried. He would sell his life as dearly as possible. But he immediately withdrew his hand with a heart-breaking groan of despair. The box was gone, and the rifle was little better than a club, for he had not loaded it since he fired last. He had probably lost the box from his pocket when he slid from the bluff or in crawling to the little spruce which now sheltered him.

He felt about in the snow near by until

his hands were numb, but all in vain. He was caught like a rat in a trap. The wolf-pack would pick his bones before many hours, for at best he could hope to keep them off but a little while.

Meanwhile the prolonged desolate howls of the pack had drawn nearer with alarming swiftness, and Donald knew that they were upon his track. In fact, they had been following him all the afternoon, eating mink and muskrat as fast as he skinned them. They had just come back to the lake region, after an unsuccessful caribou hunt to the north, and were hungry, even for wolves.

Presently the cries ceased and a less experienced woodsman than Donald might have thought they had given up the hunt, but he knew better. The silence meant that they had winded him and were approaching cautiously. Soon he could hear them sniffing and moving eagerly about in

the bushes not forty feet away. How bold they were! How fast they were closing in! This meant that they were half-starved, and also very confident of their prey. They did not usually approach man thus.

Had they some strange psychological sense of his dilemma? He thought so.

The spruce under which he crouched stood in a very small clear space. There were no other trees about for a ring of perhaps twelve feet. This, then, would be the amphitheatre where the fight would be made. It would doubtless be a short one, but he was determined that the foe should not go unpunished. So he stood the snowshoes up in front of him as a sort of bulwark to keep the wolves from snapping at his feet and legs, opened his hunting-knife and held it between his teeth, while he gripped the little rifle by the stock. There was just a grain of satisfaction in being able to sell one's life dearly.

In two or three minutes, after he first heard the sniffing in the bushes nearby, seven great timber wolves, counting the gray dog as one, sat in a grim circle about the outer edge of the little clear space, their eyes gleaming phosphorescently and their fangs partly bared as though in anticipation of the feast so near at hand. Motionless as statues and silent as the Sphinx, they sat for at least a minute and then a tall, gaunt she-wolf lifted her muzzle high in air and voiced the cry of the kill, desolate and blood-curdling to the helpless man crouching in the snow.

This was the signal for them to close in and in another minute they were springing and snapping at the almost defenseless figure. How long and terrible their jaws, and how they clicked like his own wolf-traps, thought Donald as he struck at them. How hungry and malignant their eyes, but most of all they impressed him as a fam-

ished horde of mighty dogs fighting for their meat.

At first, they circled about six or eight feet away and occasionally sprang in and snapped at him, but the circle narrowed immediately when they found how helpless he was and the fight had been in progress only two minutes, when he was striking right and left for his life.

He caught one of the wolves fairly between the eyes with the rifle's muzzle and stretched it out on the snow, but the pack were too excited and too sure of the man-kill to stop to eat one of their own number.

Another sprang and he struck and missed while the powerful jaws closed upon his sleeve, tearing away the coat and inflicting a slight flesh wound.

The fragment of the man's garment and the man's blood then drove the pack frantic and three mighty wolves sprang upon him at the same time, bearing him to earth,

although he buried his hunting-knife in the heart of the foremost.

Here the battle was really won for the pack. Like an attacking army they had carried his breastwork, sweeping over the ramparts, and the rest was easy.

In the soul of every man, and in the consciousness of every wild beast, be it even as small a thing as a wood-mouse, there is a sense that its life is something that no force or power save God has the right to take from it. It is the universal law that all these creatures, man included, in the last moment when this precious jewel seems about to be snatched from them, utter an appealing cry, the most desperate of all cries, to some power, higher and stronger than earthly means, to save them from this dreadful fate. Even a tiny mouse gives a protesting squeak as the house-cat's jaws close upon it. So Donald in the instant that the wolves bore him to earth uttered

that despairing, appealing cry, and the appeal was answered.

The two great wigwagging ears of the King caught the wild, terrified cry, as he stood uncertain in the bushes not thirty paces away, trying vainly to make out what the *mêlée* was all about. They flashed the message and the appeal to the brain of the great brute, and every one of the coarse, long hairs upon his neck and back stood up like a needle. His eyes flamed, his breath whistled viciously through his nostrils, his mighty chest heaved and with a bellow that startled the snow-clad sleeping forest, he charged like a cyclone through the underbrush and, more quickly than I am in the telling, was in the midst of the fight.

Like an avenging God, the moose reared, his broad antlers and his great homely head towered for a moment ten feet in air, and then each of his sledge-hammer hoofs descended upon the back of a wolf. As

though struck by lightning, they fell to earth and stretched out dead without so much as a dying kick.

Then, with a mighty sidewise thrust of his massive seventy-pound antlers, armed with their twenty-six spear-points, he caught another wolf in the side and tossed him high in air. As he fell, the bull planted his broad shovel-shaped horns fairly upon him and relentlessly, like a mighty Titan, ground him into the snow. His bones snapped like dead twigs beneath the great weight of the moose, for he leaned forward upon his antlers and bore down upon his victim with several hundred pounds' weight. Five seconds sufficed to leave the wolf so battered that his own dam could hardly have recognized him. Then the King wheeled again, blowing and raging with the fury of conflict, but there were none left to do battle with him, for the gray collie and his two remaining

whelps were scurrying into the bushes at a lively pace, and even one of those dragged a hind leg painfully in the snow after him.

For a few seconds the victorious bull stood blowing and stamping, the battle rage still surging in his veins; then he slowly turned and trotted back to the tree where he had been when the terrified appeal of the man creature had smote upon his ears. There he stood all night, a long soldier on guard, watching with furtive eyes and straining ears and widely distended nostrils, for sight, sound or scent of wolf.

But he saw not hair or hide of them. They had learned a lesson that they would not soon forget. Three of their number the bull had done for and a fourth had fallen with Donald's hunting-knife sticking in its heart.

As for Donald, at first he was too bewildered and amazed by the miracle and the lightning rapidity of it all to under-

stand quite what had happened. His attention was fully taken with striking right and left with his hunting-knife, to keep the wolves from tearing him to bits, so that he had not noticed the king's charge until the great hulk towered mountain-like above him. He saw the two wolves fall, as though hit by a pile-driver, but even then he did not at first recognize that this new awful force was exerted for him. It might be still another beast come to help finish him, but when the avenger ground the third wolf beneath his antlers, while the rest of the pack scurried for their lives, the full significance of his deliverance came home to him.

It was Shovelhorns. Once more he owed his life to the great homely brute. But the lump in his throat was too large for him even to call to his old friend. He felt weak and sick and like a little child. So he leaned against the tree beneath which he

had made his desperate stand, and let nature have her way, and her way is always best for overwrought nerves.

When the storm had passed, he raised upon his elbow and whistled softly for the moose, but the soldier would not leave his post. Then he called softly, "Shovelhorns, old chap," just as he had called him in the old days when he was the horned horse. But the only response that he received was a slow wigwagging of the great ears, showing that the King understood.

When pink and saffron crept into the eastern sky, and the somber aisles of the snow-clad forest became light, like a tall ghost the great moose turned silently and trotted away between the gray trunks of birch and beech into the silence of the deep woods.

Donald strained after him until his form faded like a shadow in the forest, for something told him that he should never see

him again. And although he often saw the unmistakable track of the Wilderness King, he never set eyes upon him after that morning.

When the moose had disappeared and he could no longer hear the clack of his hoofs or the sound of his antlers on the bushes as he passed, Donald crawled painfully to a small maple sapling and with his hunting-knife cut a crotched stick, which he finally fashioned into quite a respectable crutch. With this as a help he hobbled slowly back to his shack, and after lying quietly for two or three days, his ankle recovered. But in these few days of inaction, his mind often recurred to the old days and he thought with a pang in his heart of what good friends he and his horned horse had been.



CHAPTER IX
THE MOOSE REIGNS



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THE MOOSE REIGNS

FOUR more years slipped by and the King still reigned supreme in and about Lake Lonely. Like many another monarch, he occasionally extended his sway into regions which were not really his, save that all things were his by right of his mighty muscles, his keen-cutting hoofs, and his broad, many-pronged antlers.

Each spring, the greening months found him hornless and ashamed, much given to solitude, and morose with all his kind. But with the yellowing of summer-time, he grew a new set more splendid even than the last. Then it was that he polished his mighty weapon assiduously on tree-trunks against the day of combat.

With the reddening of autumn, the King's own blood ran hot and he sought the tryst under the mad witchery of the hunter's moon, or, if his mate did not come to his calling, he sent his full-chested belligerent bellow of defiance to other bulls, rolling across the lake and echoing far back among the foothills.

With the whitening of winter the moose led his little herd down Indian River to the old yarding-place that he had known when a homely moose-calf, gamboling about his mother. Here in the sheltered valley he marked out their winter confines and bade defiance to the elements.

Each year that had passed had added inches to the King's height, width to his twenty-six antlers, and many pounds to his great weight. Other bulls who happened into his favorite range fared hard. Those who did not run at the very sight of him soon fled pell-mell, usually torn, beaten and

bleeding, while one who dared a mortal combat never went back to the land of his sires.

But though the King had barely reached his zenith, for some moose do not get their growth until they are ten or twelve years old, the gray collie, leader of the wolf-band, had seen his noontide and for him the sun was on the western hilltops. He was now ten years old, which is a good old age for a dog living the easy life of a farm dog, or the house-pet, but out in the wild, living the life of a wolf, he had aged much more rapidly than he would have done living his natural life.

The warmth and luxury that his ancestors had known during their long association with man had made it just so much harder again to take up the life of the wilderness. So now in his tenth year his face was wrinkled and careworn. His eyesight was dim, and rheumatism had crippled him

badly. It was no longer safe for him to play fast and loose with the King. Formerly it had been his chief delight to sit upon his haunches within a few feet of the great moose, and bark at him until he nearly drove the bull mad, but now he dared not take such chances. His legs were too full of cramps, and his mind was not so quick to aid him in eluding the moose's hoofs.

One morning early in September, about eight years after the death of the little Dog-Woman, the old collie trotted slowly down to the lake and drank freely of its cool waters. This morning he felt older and weaker even than usual, for the King had almost got him as he slept beneath a juniper-bush. His good angel had caused him to turn his head just a little in his sleep, so the bull's hoof had missed, and he had been just quick enough to get out of the way before he could strike again.

He could not take many chances like this, for if he did not play the game better, his hour would soon come. Besides, he could not hunt with his old skill and zest, and consequently he often went hungry. But most of all he could feel the great dark, which we all feel about us, slowly deepening about him. Life, strong and full, had been the spark that had kept it back all these years, but now it was surely coming like the gloom enfolding a dying camp-fire.

How tired he was, and how weak. Now he had slaked his thirst, he would go and sleep beneath a clump of willows near at hand. So he went, and after turning about half a dozen times to make an easy place for his tired old muscles, lay down and slept. The sun mounted to the zenith, and still he slept; it dipped to the western hill and stood blood red on the horizon line, and still the leader of the gray pack had not moved a muscle.

In the cool eventide the King came down to exactly the same spot to slake his thirst. He waded knee-deep in the water and drank long and eagerly. At last he lifted his head, and partly turning saw his enemy asleep under the willows.

For a full minute he stood and watched him. The red hate glowed in his eyes, and as noiselessly as a panther he crept forward. He would make no mistake this time, but would finish his foe. Step by step he approached until at last he was within striking distance. He braced himself to spring and land his two fore-hoofs upon the old dog's skull, but he did not spring. Instead, he stood tense but uncertain. His enemy had never before been so sleepy as this. His eye, his ear, his nose had always been as keen as the moose's own. The great bull began blowing loud breaths through his nostrils to awaken him, but the dog did

not stir. Then the bull advanced slowly, step by step, until he stood over him, but still he did not move.

Suddenly, with a loud snort of alarm, the bull wheeled and went crashing off through the bushes, without even stopping to look back.

He understood at last. The leader of the gray pack had fallen into the deep long sleep that claims all life, and he would still be there when he came to drink in the morning, if the foxes did not find him first. Of his own pack none were left. After his narrow escape, Donald had waged a war of extermination against them for the rest of the winter, and he had got all but their leader. Now he too was gone, and the moose exulted that another of his enemies was laid low.

Now there was but one cloud left in his sky and that was the hot rank scent of the bear. Ever since that autumn afternoon when a

half-grown bear had felled the moose-calf to earth, and all but finished him before the timely interference of his mother, he had known an unreasoning fear of bruin. This was the one weak point in his armor, and as he charged through the bushes, he felt so strong and so belligerent that he longed for something worthy against which he might match his great strength.

Presently the sweet evening wind, fragrant with the very wraith of perfume, the scent of the witch-hazel, blew in the King's nostrils, and at the same instant he scented bear. The hair upon his neck went up, and his eyes blazed. Usually, he did not go after a fight with a full-grown bear, although he always fought when any bear questioned his right to his kingdom; but now he changed his tactics, and rapidly followed the scent up the wind. His good nose led him along the shore of the lake



THE MOOSE BOWLED HIM OVER



for a few rods. There he saw his old-time enemy, a full-grown he-bear, digging roots along the edge of the water.

Cautiously the moose crept forward, but the bear was watchful, as bruin always is when feeding, and every few seconds he would stop to listen and test the air. When the bull was about forty feet away, he saw him and whirled about on guard to give battle, but he clearly did not like his own position, being caught away from cover, and with the lake at his back.

Without waiting to weigh the chances of success, the bull charged, but the bear stepped to one side as he came upon him and dealt him a glancing blow upon the shoulder. In turn, the moose bowled him over with the end of his antlers, but before he could turn and finish him, the bear was again on guard. It was now fighting at close range and there was no more dodging. This time the King caught the bear fairly

upon his antler, but his nose was laid open to the bone. This did not deter him, however, but merely enraged him. He now resorted to his old tactics, which had worked so well on the wolves, and rearing, brought down both his hoofs fairly upon the bear's shoulders with crushing effect. But the bear's heavy coat stood him in good stead, and his sloping shoulders also helped to save him from those sledge-hammer blows. Although the bear was knocked down and stunned, he was not killed. Far from it, for in an instant he was up, and reaching for the King's neck with his strong arms. Once in that deadly embrace, the bull would be at his mercy. Again the moose reared just quickly enough to save himself, and this time he broke the bear's back with his pile-driving hoofs, and stretched him dead on the sand-spit. But victory was not enough for the King in this, the hour of his triumph. So he trod

and stamped his fallen adversary until he had completely ground him into the sand, and broken nearly every bone in his body, as though, with this entire wiping out of his old enemy, he trod beneath his hoofs the sense of his own fear and humiliation, that had always haunted him, and bade defiance to the world.

When he had satisfied the last remnant of rage in his great hulk, he plunged into the lake and struck out for the opposite shore. Strong and steady he swam, for was he not King of the woods and the waters? Smaller and smaller grew the shape on the lake, until at last it was a mere speck, and then it disappeared altogether. Vainly the eye strained to discern him but the unsteady glimmer of the water had swallowed the black speck.

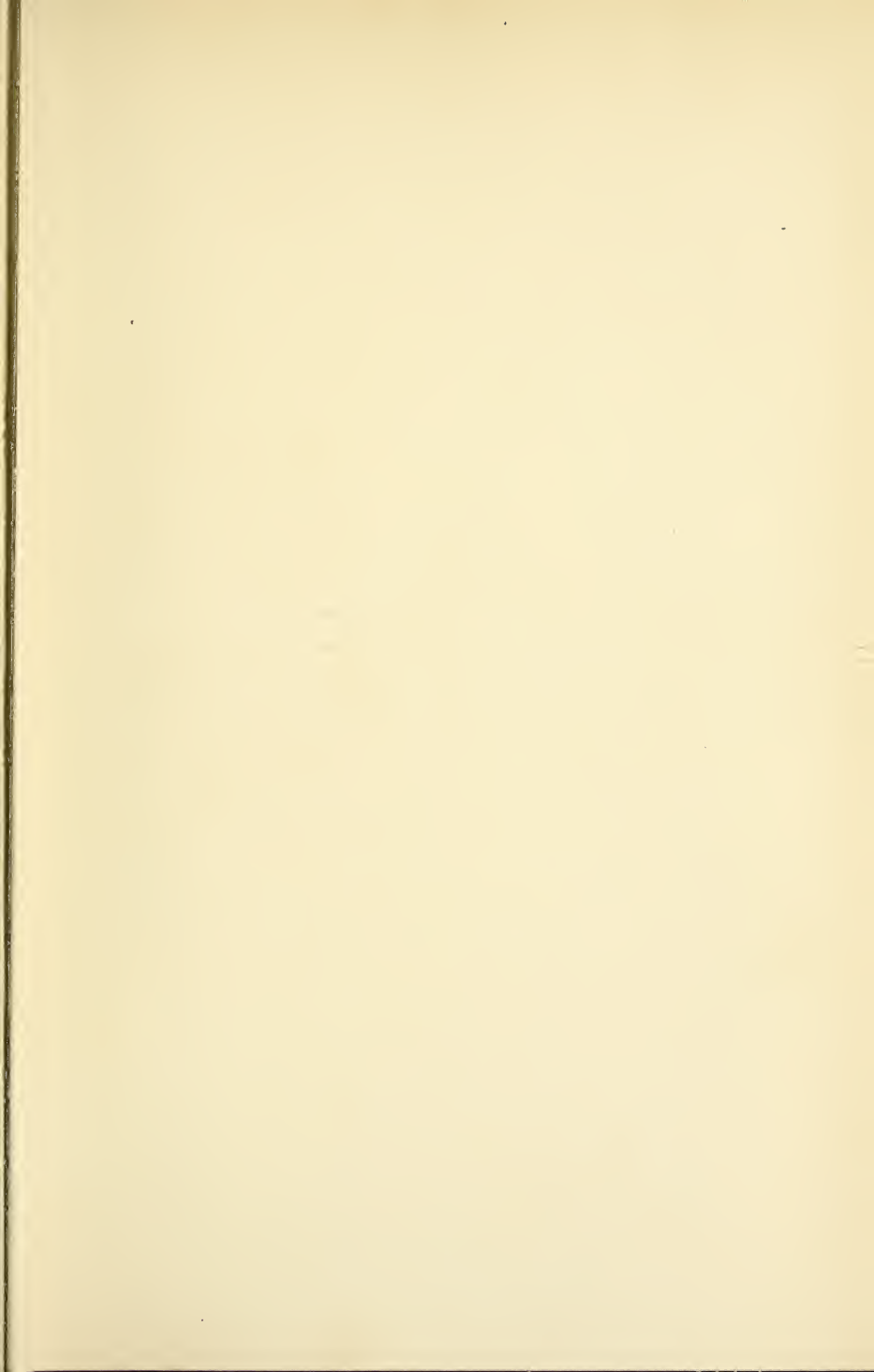
Hark, what is that! A crashing and a thrashing in the underbrush. He has made it, and the King of the woods is charging

through the forest in fine disdain of all obstacles.

Hark, what is that! A deep booming bellow, resonant, reverberating, and of mighty volume, rolls clearly across the lake, echoes three distinct times in the foothills and then is lost in the deep silence that always enfolds the wilderness.

Listen, there is an answer. Faint and far it comes. The low of the cow, like an echo of her lord's call.

Again the deep-chested bellow booms across the lake like the peal of a great gun, and again that faint, thin far-away answer. Once more there is a crashing and breaking of underbrush as the King charges through the forest to keep the tryst. Fainter and fainter grow the sounds until at last only a mere snapping of twigs is heard; then silence again, the deep eternal silence of the wilderness.







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